

A N  
E S S A Y  
CONCERNING 13  
TRUTH and CHARITY.  
In Two Parts.

CONTAINING,

- I. An Enquiry concerning *Fundamental Articles of Faith*, and the Necessity of adhering to them, in Order to *Church-Communion*.
- II. Some Historical Remarks on the Behaviour of the *Jews* and *Primitive Christians*, towards those who had either departed from the Faith, or by any other Offences render'd themselves liable to *Excommunication*.

SHEWING ALSO,

What is that Uncharitableness which discovers it self in the Conduct of Men towards one another.

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By *THOMAS RIDGLER*.

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ESSAY

CONSTITUTION

THE CHARTER

OF TWO PARTS

CONTAINING



AND A NEW

BY THOMAS RICHARDSON

LONDON

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A N  
**ENQUIRY,**  
 CONCERNING  
*Fundamental* ARTICLES  
 O F  
**FAITH, &c.**



**T**RUTH and Charity are no less essential to a *Christian*, than Reason is to a *Man* : The *former* is claim'd by all, how widely soever they differ among themselves; the *latter* is sometimes not only pretended to, but as it were ingross'd by many, who, from the manner of their treating those who differ from them, give the Standers by occasion to conclude, that if weigh'd in a just Balance, they also would be found wanting. But my Design in the following Pages is to enquire into the Nature of these excellent Endow-

ments, rather than the Justice of Men's Pretensions unto 'em; and that we may confine our Thoughts within a narrow Compass, we shall consider *Charity*, not as comprising all those Offices of Kindness which we owe to *Mankind in general*, as it is the Summ of the *second Table* of the *Moral Law*; but principally as it respects our Sentiments of Men, embracing a sett of Notions in Religion, which we call *true* or *false*; and therefore we shall not consider *Truth* as having *all Things founded on just Evidence* for its Object; but as depending on a *Divine Testimony*, and as having a Reference to, and Connexion with, Salvation. We have therefore in this Argument no immediate Concern with those who deny divine Revelation, or others who set human Authority on a Level with it, and therefore take it for granted,

## § I.

THAT the *Scripture* is the Foundation and *Rule of Truth*, the Standard by which 'tis to be tried, and the Treasury in which 'tis contain'd. That indeed which particular Persons judge true may not be so, and the only Reason is, because 'tis not an express *Text of Scripture*, or a just Deduction from it: However, that some Scripture Consequences are just, is no hard Matter to prove; but it is not our Business at present to determine what are so, nor do we reckon 'em so because they are *ours*, but we must suppose that some are so; for if no Man ever drew a just Consequence from Scripture, it has hitherto been of no Use to those that have enquir'd into the Sense thereof; and then no Doctrines deliver'd from the Pulpits, since the Apostles Time, are to be depended on, otherwise then as *probable*, but having no Foundation of *Certainty*; and then our Religion would be brought into very narrow Limits; and 'tis well, if while

we guard (as doubtless we ought to do) against every Thing that has the least Tendency to establish the Intallibility of Man's Reasoning, we do not set aside those Consequences which are self-evident, and by that means open a Door to Scepticism, and deny them; though equally just with that Method of Reasoning, by which we prove the Scriptures to be the Word of GOD, or any other Principle of Religion deduced from thence; which we cannot safely do, though not contain'd in express Words therein; and whatever Consequences are just, are to be believed, because they are so, without Regard to the Authority of him that infers 'em.

THIS Argument might be maintain'd without much Difficulty; but a Reverend \*Brother has judiciously manag'd it, and is able to maintain what he has advanc'd, when a Reply thereunto shall render it necessary. All that I shall infer from thence is, That whatever Doctrine contains a just or true Sense of Scripture, is Scripture, and ought to be deem'd so, not only by him who makes the Deduction, but by all Men.

## § II.

EVERY Part of Scripture has *one determinate Sense*, or no Scripture contains two contrary Senses; 'tis true, many of the Words us'd therein will admit of various, and sometimes contrary Senses, as is common in all Languages; but that the Mind of the Holy Ghost, conveyed by every Word, is to be taken but in one determinate Sense (which we are often at a Loss to know; from whence arise various Conjectures, according to the various Sentiments of Expositors) is very obvious; for otherwise

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\* Mr. Cumming's Dissert concerning Scripture Consequences.



therwise two contrary Ideas, contain'd in the same Word, or two contrary Propositions, contain'd in the same Sentence, must be both true. Certainly if Simplicity and Plainness of Style be the Beauty of an human Composure, and the contrary detracts from its Usefulness, and argues a Defect of Wisdom, Goodness and Faithfulness in it's Author, we ought by no means to assert any Thing which would cast the like Blemish on the *Sacred Oracles*, or contain an unworthy Charge against a holy, wise and gracious GOD, and which would bring the Scriptures into Contempt, and render them like the *Trumpet which gives an uncertain Sound*.

## § III.

THOUGH the *Truth and Authority* of every Part of Scripture be the same, inasmuch as 'tis equally *inspir'd by the same infallible Spirit*; yet its *Usefulness*, or immediate Subserviency to *Salvation*, which we call the *Importance* thereof, cannot be suppos'd to be the same, as to all the Doctrines or Historical Narrations which it contains. Thus the *Order and Time* in which this lower World was fram'd, the *Genealogies* interspers'd thro' many parts of Scripture, the *Wars of Judah and Israel*, and the *History* of the Affairs of other Nations, with which they had to do, and many other Things related, concerning the Providence of GOD to his Church; though they are not only infallibly *true*, but exceedingly *delightful* and useful to answer many Ends, far more valuable than any that can be attain'd by the best Histories of human Composure; yet these cannot be suppos'd to be of equal Importance with other parts of Scripture, containing the History of the *Life and Death* of our *Blessed Saviour*; the same may be observ'd concerning many other Doctrines contain'd in Scripture. But because this Head is principally to be consider'd in our *present Argument*, we ought to be more particular in the Proof thereof :

of : And this I shall chuse to do, not by an Induction of all the particular Doctrines, that may be concluded to be of the highest Importance ; but by laying down a *general Rule*, whereby we may judge of the *Importance* of a *Doctrine*, which when duly consider'd, 'twill easily appear that one Doctrine is of far greater Importance than another ; the Rule I wou'd lay down, is, that every Doctrine is of greater or less Importance, according to its Tendency, to answer the great End, for which the Scripture was given, *viz. the promoting true Religion*, which consists in our advancing, and having becoming Thoughts of the divine Perfections, and worshipping GOD agreeably thereunto, as those who expect the *End of their Faith, even the Salvation of their Souls*. That these things are of the *last Importance*, I need not prove ; and 'tis as evident, that they are so connected, that one cannot be attain'd without the other ; and that every Doctrine contain'd in Scripture, has not an equal Tendency to answer these Ends will be allow'd. But if it be enquir'd, what kind of Doctrines those are ? It might be answer'd, Such as are supposed in, and are the very Basis and Foundation of, all *religious Worship*. Of this kind are those which truly fix and determine the *Object* thereof, and direct us to give it to no other but a *Divine Person*, who only can have a Right to it, as having all divine Perfections ; and that there are more than one *Divine Person* who have these Perfections, on which this Right to Worship is founded ; and as to the *Mode of Worship*, that sinful Man is to have Access to GOD, and may hope for Acceptance with him, in and thro' a *Mediator*, who is both GOD and Man, of which we have so plain and large an Account in Scripture ; also that this Access is the Result of the *Divine Assistance*, and particularly, 'tis by one *Spirit*

rit we are to obtain it. That these Doctrines are of the *highest Importance*, and absolutely necessary to be believ'd, is plain from the Account we have in Scripture, of the Nature of instituted Worship ; so that without it, the Foundation of reveal'd Religion is sapp'd, and a full Stop put to it in the Christian World, which professes to be *built upon the Foundation of the Apostles and Prophets*, JESUS CHRIST himself being the *chief Corner Stone*. And that a Directory for true Religion is to be found no where else, those who own the Necessity, as well as the Sufficiency and Authority thereof, will allow. Several other Doctrines subservient to Religion, and involv'd in it, might have been instanc'd in ; but what has been said is sufficient to prove the general Position laid down, that some Doctrines are of greater Importance than others.

## § IV.

THO' every thing asserted contrary to the genuine Sense of Scripture is an Error ; yet every Error of that Nature is not sinful. In considering the *Innocency* or *Sinfulness* of Error, we have nothing to do in our present Argument with that which is *invincible*, arising more especially from the want of *Divine Revelation* ; for we suppose a Person enquiring into, and mistaken about the Sense of Scripture ; now to understand the Sense of Scripture, is either to have a *perfect* and *adequate* Conception of a Doctrine contain'd therein, or else to have a *just Idea* of it, so far as it may be comprehended by us : In the *former* Sense, there are some Doctrines which the Wisdom of Men or Angels can never fully attain to : In particular those that relate to the *incommunicable Perfections* of GOD, whom by searching *none can find out to Perfection*, Job xi. 7. This Defect of Understanding argues us *finite*, but not *sinful*, and proceeds



proceeds from the Disproportion that there is between the Object and the Faculty, which is conversant about it. Our Enquiries indeed concerning these *divine Mysteries*, may be so circumstantiated, as to render them sinful; as when they are attended with a *vain Conceit*, that what is immense may be brought within the Compass of a finite Mind; or with a *bold Curiosity* in searching into what belongs not to us to know, nor indeed is possible to be known.

ERROR, in the *latter* Sense, as refer'd to Scripture Doctrines, which come within the Reach of our Conceptions, or may in a considerable Degree be comprehended by us, is our not taking in the true *Sense of what is reveal'd*, arising from our not rightly understanding the Propriety of the Languages, in which the Scriptures were wrote; the Import of the Phrases used by the *Holy Ghost* therein, or from a *Defect in our arguing*, as when we infer Consequences that are not just from Scripture Premisses; now though this be a *Defect*, it cannot in every Instance be reckon'd *sinful*; for though two contradictory Propositions can't be both true, yet differing Persons may assert what is contradictory to each other; in which Case one must err, who, notwithstanding at the same Time, may not be chargeable with Sin; as in those Instances, in which the Object or Mode of Worship is not immediately concern'd, the Foundation of it weaken'd, nor the Error in the least subversive thereof, nor of what is immediately subservient thereunto. Thus if I think that *Melchizedeck*, mention'd in *Gen. xiv.* was CHRIST assuming the Form or Likeness of the human Nature, to answer that present Occasion, and to give an Emblem of his future Incarnation, as he did in various other Instances; and another thinks that he was an Inhabitant of the Land of *Canaan*, having the Character and Dignity of a *Priest* and

*King*, we can't both be free from Error ; but I hope we are neither of us to be charg'd with *Sin*: Or if with a becoming Humility and Reverence, agreeable to the Greatness of the Mystery, I conceive those Scriptures, which speak of a Subordination of the Son to the Father, are better understood, and may be vindicated more consistently with his divine Glory, as a self existing Being, by supposing that they all refer to him as Mediator ; in which sense he is not only subordinate, but a Subject ; and another, tho' allowing this to be true in many Instances, yet thinks, that some of those Scriptures may as well be accounted for, by asserting, that the Son is subordinate to the Father, as begotten by a necessary Communication of the divine Essence, in which Respect, the Father is the *Fountain of the Deity*, or of the *Trinity* : One of us is doubtless mistaken, as to the Sense of those Scriptures, from which our differing Sentiments are deduc'd ; but we have both a Design to set forth the Glory of the Son, as *GOD*, equal with the Father, and as having a distinct Personality from him ; we both desire to *honour the Son as we honour the Father*, and neither of our Sentiments are subversive hereof ; therefore neither of us is guilty of a sinful, much less of a dangerous Mistake ; but to pass by other Instances that might be mention'd.

## § v.

THE Sinfulness of Error consists principally in its *Effects and Consequences* ; and these are either the begetting in the Mind unwarrantable and unbecoming Thoughts of *GOD* and divine Things, or incapacitating us for his Service. Not to have right Conceptions of the great *GOD* contains not only an Absurdity in it self, but hereby an Injury is offer'd, and a Reflection cast upon him ; and if so, whatever is an Inducement thereunto, or the Spring

Spring from whence it proceeds ; much more that which renders these unworthy Thoughts of him in some sense necessary, must be reckon'd sinful.

THAT Error also is sinful, which renders a Person altogether unfit, rightly to perform that *religious Worship*, or other Acts of Duty which we owe to GOD ; for whatsoever is indispensably our Duty, the bare Non-performance of it is culpable or criminal, for thereby we deny him the Glory due to his Name ; and if this is occasion'd by Error, that cannot be altogether clear from the like Charge.

§ VI.

ERRORS subversive of the *fundamental Articles of Faith*, or such as contain a Denial of those Truths which are of the highest Importance, are inconsistent with the divine Favour, and a Right and Title to eternal Life, as well as *Unholiness* and *Immorality* in Practice. They who make no Pretensions to Religion, will scarce deny its Necessity to Salvation ; and therefore 'tis reckon'd no Instance of Uncharitableness to assert that Irreligion excludes from it ; and this is applicable, not only to the outward and more gross *Acts* of Immorality and Prophaneness, but to the *Habits* and Principles from whence they proceed, which are also the Object of divine Displeasure ; this, I think, needs no Proof, for though human Judicature takes no Cognisance of any other but overt Acts, because none can judge beyond what is apparent to him ; the Case is otherwise, when we have to do with the *Searcher of Hearts*. Let me also add, that the total Suspension of internal Religion, when a Person has nothing more than what is contain'd in the outward Form thereof, which hardly deserves the Name of Religion, is displeasing to GOD, and disqualifies for Salvation, as well as Irreligion in the more notorious Instances



thereof ; for this is in Effect to deny the Allegiance due from us, as Subjects, and neglecting to pay the Debt we owe him as Creatures ; and such an one may truly be said to live *without God in the World*, and therefore *without Hope* ; as well as another, whose Opposition to the divine Laws, is a more visible Argument that he does so, and consequently that he has no Right to eternal Life. This, I presume, will also be allow'd, and therefore the Thing that I am to evince, is that the denying the most *important* or *fundamental Articles of Faith* (which how they may be known, has been before consider'd) is pernicious in its Consequences, as well as Irreligion or Unholiness of Heart and Life ; though I don't say that they are equally aggravated, or alike displeasing to God ; which that I may do, I need only prove that there is something in the one, which renders a Person unmeet for the Fruition of God, and the heavenly State, as well as the other. That this may appear, let us consider that sinful Actions, or even a Suspension of good ones, which, we suppose, displeasing to God, arise from, and are refer'd to the erroneous Dictates of the Mind, as not assenting to, or disbelieving divine Truths ; so that the first Defect is in the *Understanding*, and this leads to Irreligion and Immorality, which are seated in the *Will*, which acts under the Conduct and Direction thereof ; if therefore the Dictates of the *Understanding* lead to sinful Actions, they are not excusable from the Guilt and Consequence thereof. Thus if Idolatry be a Sin, then the Mind that presents a wrong Object, is involv'd in Guilt, and its erroneous Dictates chargeable, as well as the Will, which is more directly and immediately so ; and if the bare *Suspension of Religion* might be abstracted from those acts of *Irreligion*, which are positive, which is, as has been consider'd, displeasing

pleasing to GOD; or if the *not worshipping a Divine Person*, who has a Right to worship, be a Crime, because a Neglect to pay the just Debt we owe Him; then an erroneous Mind, so far as it is concern'd herein, must be chargeable with the Crime and its Consequents. 'Tis for this Reason doubtless, that the Scripture so often represents it as a Matter of the last Importance, to *know GOD* and divine Things immediately subservient to Religion; and denounces the severest Threatnings against those who are *ignorant* thereof: Thus we are told that 'tis *Life Eternal*, that is absolutely necessary thereunto, *to know the only true GOD, and JESUS CHRIST whom he hath sent*. And on the other Hand, there are the highest Instances of Divine Displeasure, express'd by the pouring forth of his Wrath, and his taking Vengeance on them, *who know him not*, as well as those who *obey not the Gospel*; and the Reason is evident, because the one necessarily flows from the other. Our Saviour also tells the *Jews*, *If ye believe not that I am He*, that is, that *I am the ōw*, or the *I AM*, or self-existing Being, or He whose Name alone is *Jehovah*; or else if you believe not that I am the *Messiah*, He that was expected before, to come into the World with that Character, and as such to bring about the great Work of Redemption, which you are so immediately concern'd to know and believe, *you shall dye in your Sins*.

SEVERAL things of the like Nature might be collected from Scripture, which we pass over, and shall only add, that if some Doctrines contain'd therein, are not necessary to be known to Salvation, then *divine Revelation* it self would not be necessary, and the Principles of *natural Religion* would be sufficient, though the Scripture were lost; but this is very contrary to the Apostle *Paul's* Method of arguing, *Rom. x. 13.* where he asserts  
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a Connection between the Exercise of Religion, or calling upon the Name of the LORD, and Salvation, which will more easily be allow'd; and then he asserts the Necessity of Faith to Religion, or calling on GOD, and in Order to that, the Necessity of hearing, which cometh by the Word of GOD; therefore the Word of GOD is necessary to Salvation, which it can't be, if its most important Doctrines are not necessary to be known and believed in order thereunto. I might add, which will silence, if it does not convince, that they who deny the Necessity of believing Scripture Doctrines unto Salvation, allow, as apprehending it does not concern themselves, that it is necessary to Salvation to believe there is a GOD, and consequently that *Speculative Atheism* excludes from his Favour; and what is the Reason that this is of so dangerous a Tendency, but because all Religion is hereby excluded? Therefore I might hence infer, that the denying Scripture Revelation, and particularly the most important Articles of Faith, or perverting them, which is in Effect the same, as much excludes true Religion, as Atheism does Religion in general; and what is Religion if it be not true? Therefore if the one be allow'd to be important, and the Disbelief thereof pernicious, why should the same be denied with respect to the other?

IF it be objected, that Atheism is contrary to the Dictates of Nature, and is a Denial of what is manifest to any one, who makes use of his reasoning Faculty; to this it may be answer'd. That the Method by which a Doctrine may be known, whether it be more or less obvious, does not make the Doctrine it self of greater or less Importance, and makes no Alteration as to its Tendency, to answer certain Ends to which it is subservient, therefore that adds no weight to the objection: But  
our



our Business is only to enquire, what Influence *speculative Atheism*, or the Denial of the most *important Articles of Faith*, contain'd in Scripture, have on Religion? And if they are equally inconsistent with the true Religion or Worship of GOD, then if one be allow'd to be of a dangerous Consequence, the other must not be denied to be so.

IF the Distinction concerning *Religion in general*, and the *true Religion*, be suppos'd not to have any relation to Salvation; let me add, that whatever Persons may call the true Religion, agreeable to their different way of understanding Scripture; yet certainly there is such a Thing, which may justly be so call'd; and if to worship GOD, *as* GOD, deserves that Character, then that is as necessary as any one can suppose Religion in general to be; and indeed all Worship without it has nothing more than the Name; and if none can worship GOD aright, without his own Prescription, and that rightly understood, especially as to what concerns the Essentials thereof, and in particular the divine Glory of its Object; then the denying those Scripture Doctrines, which are necessarily subservient thereunto, are equally dangerous with speculative Atheism, which is allow'd to exclude from the Favour of GOD.

IF this be reckon'd an hard Saying, bordering on Uncharitableness, let it be consider'd that it rather respects the *Doctrines* themselves, than the *Persons* that hold 'em. But if it be said that these two are not to be separated, but he that hold's pernicious Doctrines, must be in danger of perishing. I pretend not to set Bounds to the Mercy which GOD may have in Store not only for those who deny the most important Articles of Faith, but even for Atheists and immoral Persons: 'Tis not for us to pretend to determine the final Estate of Persons, to whom a compassionate GOD

is able to give *Repentance to the Acknowledgment of the Truth* ; nevertheless we are bound, unless the Arguments alledg'd appear inconclusive, to assert some Doctrines to be of a dangerous Tendency ; not as expressing any Hatred against those that hold 'em, but as a Motive which we desire to be influenc'd by, to acknowledge the Kindness of Providence, if we are led into the Knowledge of the contrary Truth ; or to excite us to a more diligent search of Scripture, that we may attain the Knowledge thereof, and be further establish'd therein.

## § VII.

As the most *sincere disinterested Inquiry after Truth* don't render him who denies it *less erroneous*, so it does not render the Truth itself *less necessary* to be known or believed by him ; the *former* of these none will deny, since Mistakes don't take their Denomination from (however they may be sometimes occasion'd by) a Defect of Diligence or Impartiality in our Inquiries after Truth, but from their Contrariety and Opposition to it ; and as for the *latter*, since the Importance of a Doctrine, as has been before considered, consists in its Subserviency to Religion and Salvation ; there is no reason to suppose that the same Truth may be of Importance or necessary to Salvation to one, and not so to another. It will be hard to prove, that the sincere Inquirer after it may be religious, and so have a Right to eternal Life, without rightly understanding or believing those Doctrines which are subservient to Religion, and necessary to be known to Salvation, so that no Man's State is to be reckon'd desperate, but his who through a supine Negligence omits to enquire after it, or is prepossessed with Prejudice in favour of one side, or partial in his Enquiries.

WE are in order to our evincing the Truth of this Proposition ; to consider what it is that affects  
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a Man's State so far as to render him the Object of divine Displeasure ; and to prove that it is the denying, or not believing those Articles of Faith, which we call the most important, and not meerly his not using those sincere Endeavours to know them, which he ought to have done, that brings him under this Inconvenience. We must therefore assert, that those Errors are pernicious which are subversive of Religion, as directed by, and contain'd in, divine Revelation, whatever be the Spring or superadded Aggravation of them. If this be not true, then 'twill follow either that a Man may be saved without Religion, or else, be religious without knowing those Things which are directly and immediately subservient thereunto ; and that he may be saved without worshipping aright, or else may worship aright, without having just *Ideas* of the Object and Rule thereof, as contain'd in Scripture ; but this must be allow'd to be preposterous, by all who own the Necessity of, and pay a due Regard to, divine Revelation.

HOWEVER, the contrary is maintained by many, who argue, that nothing renders a Person the Object of divine Displeasure, but what is in our Power to avoid : Or, that Sin, which is a Transgression of the divine Law, has not its Residence in the Understanding, but the Will ; and therefore the divine Resentment respects not what *we think* agreeably to the Evidence that presents it self to us, but what *we do* ; from whence it will follow, that all Errors, abstracted from the Willfulness which may attend them, are equally innocent, and have none of them a pernicious Tendency.

To this it may be reply'd, that this Method of arguing, supposes some Things which are not to be allowed, *viz.* that it is possible for the Mind to be perverted, as to its *Ideas* about divine Truth, and



the most important Articles thereof; and yet the Will, at the same Time, not to be in the least affected therewith, which never was nor can be true in Fact: Thus it is impossible for a Man to be mistaken about the Nature of Good or Evil, with a particular Application thereof to himself; or about what is necessary to Salvation, or who is the Object of religious Worship, and how we are to perform it, but the Will must be some way or other affected with it, so that hereby a good or a sinful Action is introduced; thus if an erroneous Mind suggests that the *Son* and *Spirit* are not to be worshipped as *GOD*; can the Will be altogether unaffected hereby? If it resolves to worship notwithstanding, then it is guilty of Presumption, and consequential Idolatry; and if it refuses to worship them, it denies them the Glory that is really, though not apprehended to be, their due, which necessarily incurs divine Displeasure.

AGAIN, that supposition, that nothing is displeasing to *GOD*, but what is in our Power to avoid, is not to be allowed of, unless it can be proved, that the habitual Inclination of fallen and depraved Nature, to Sin, which is unavoidable, is not displeasing to Him.

AND when it is asserted, that some *Errors*, which we call dangerous or *displeasing to God*, are not really so, because unavoidable to the Person that holds them; this cannot be allow'd, because false Reasonings may be unavoidable to particular Persons, who cannot see the Force of the Premises, from whence other Conclusions ought to be deduced, and yet the Person herein be culpable. This was the Case of those with whom the Apostle *Paul* disputed, who could not help thinking Christianity *Foolishness*; because they could not see the Force of his Arguments, to evince the Truth thereof; yet this is reckoned a pernicious

Error

Error in them, for they are distinguish'd from those *who are saved*, and characterized as *them that perish*, 1 Cor. i. 18.

IT remains therefore, that some mental Errors render Men the Object of divine Displeasure; and if any, then such are included, as have been before describ'd. It must therefore be concluded by those who suppose that the *Sincerity* of their Enquiries after Truth, exempts them, who happen to fall into the greatest Errors, from the divine Displeasure; that the Sin which adheres to these Errors is dispensed with, because of the *Sincerity* of their Enquiry after Truth. This is asserted by many, with so much Assurance, that the vilest Absurdities are charged on the Denial of it, as though it contained an Impeachment of the divine Goodness, and argued a Defect in his Government, and represented him as dealing with us, in such a way, as we wou'd not, nay ought not, to deal with any whom we have a Right to give Laws to.

THIS Method of arguing is reducible to *one general Head*, viz. that if a Man *uses his best Endeavours to avoid any Error*, it shall not be imputed to him, so as to involve him in Guilt and Punishment. But if this *Proposition* be true, it will from hence follow, that the moral Impotency of the Will to perform those Acts, which are good in all their Circumstances, exempts from Punishment otherwise due to the Non-performance thereof; and then Disobedience to the divine Law, so far as the contrary is out of our Power, is no Crime. But this supposes, either that there is no such Thing as *moral Impotency* in Man to what is good, or else that GOD's Right of commanding, or especially of punishing, in case of Default of Obedience, must stand or fall with our Power to perform it.

BUT not to insist on the Absurdity of this Position, or its opening a Door to Licentiousness; I shall only observe from hence, that if a Defect of Knowledge of divine Truth, or the Minds being perverted in such a Manner, as is before described, has been proved to be displeasing to GOD, which Argument we shall not now reassume; 'twill then follow, that though the *Sincerity* of our *Enquiry* after Truth extenuate, yet it don't render it no Crime, and consequently not punishable by GOD, in Proportion to its Aggravation, and the Importance of the Truth denied.

BUT if it be farther objected, that GOD's *Right* to punish, don't necessarily infer the *Exercise* thereof, for then who could be saved?

I ANSWER, that his *Right* to punish, and the *Exercise* of that *Right*, are not to be separated in those Instances, where the Crime and the Punishment are inseparably connected, in the Nature of the Thing. Thus, if *to know the only true GOD, and JESUS CHRIST whom he hath sent*, be inseparably connected with the *Fruition of GOD, in and through a Mediator*; and by Consequence the *not knowing* this, inseparably connected with *Non-fruition*, then so far as not to enjoy, is not to be happy, or not to obtain eternal Life; there is from the Nature of the Thing, such a Connection between the *Defect* not knowing, &c. and the *Punishment* not enjoying, which is impossible to be dissolved; therefore if you suppose a Person not to know GOD and JESUS CHRIST, &c. GOD has not only a Right to debar him from the Fruition of himself, but from the Nature of the thing, he cannot but punish the Person, so far as Exclusion from this Favour, contains in it the Nature of Punishment; it is therefore no Ground of Exemption from it, for any one to alledge, that he has endeavoured after this Knowledge, tho' without



out Success, since the Blessing connected with it, depends not on the Endeavouring after, but the actual attaining of it.

IF this reasoning be just, 'twill follow from hence, that such Errors as we are considering, are punishable: But what degree of Punishment, besides what arises from the Nature of the Thing GOD will inflict, I pretend not to know; neither does it concern our present Argument.

BUT suppose it shou'd be granted, that *Sincerity* in some Instances thereof, entitles to, or is connected with the *divine Favour*, and exempts from Punishment; yet sincere or disinterested Endeavours to know the Truth, are the lowest Degree of *Sincerity* that can be suppos'd; for in this Case there's no Temptation to Hypocrisy; for what Advantage can any one propose to himself, by dissembling in his Enquiries after Truth? Or what remarkable Instance of Virtue is there in a Man's endeavouring not to impose upon himself? And shall this entitle to Salvation, so far as knowing the Truth is subservient thereunto?

AND suppose farther, that we are ever so *sincere* in our Enquiries after the Theory of divine Truth, are there not some Reserves of Sovereignty in GOD to be allow'd of, so that he may deny Success to us if he pleases? If not, why is his *leading into all Truth*, or giving us the Knowledge thereof, mention'd in several Places of Scripture, as an Instance of special Favour?

BUT if even this will not be allow'd, may not the *sincere Enquirer* after Truth, be a *vile Person* in many other Respects, and so forfeit the Favour pleaded for, by those who suppose Salvation connected with it? Is there not such a Thing as judicial *Blindness*, *strong Delusions*, or being left, not forc'd, by GOD to believe a Lie, as the Apostle intimates? And may not this happen to one, who does not de-  
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fire to deceive himself? and may not this be a Punishment for other Sins, which Men are chargeable with, notwithstanding the Sincerity of their Endeavours to know the Truth?

To what has been suggested under this Head, I must not omit to mention one Scripture, which, if duly consider'd, will support our present Argument, tho' often brought as an Objection against it, *viz.* *Titus* iii. 10, 11. Where the Apostle speaks of an *Heretick*, whose Sentiments are chargeable with Sin, and for them he is to be *rejected* by those who are Members of a Christian Church. 'Tis thought indeed by many, that the Person here spoke of, is one who pretends to believe one Doctrine, *viz.* that which is of a most destructive Tendency, but really believes another, and therefore is rejected; not for his *Sentiments*, but his *Insincerity*, which many suppose to be the true and only Character of an *Heretick*; and therefore the only Reason why he is said herein to sin, is because he is *αὐτοκατάκριτος* & *self-condemned*, that is, as is supposed, because he knows in his own Conscience, that what he maintains for Truth, is an Error.

BUT to this it may be reply'd, that though all must grant, that there may be some in the World who think to find their Account, by gaining popular Applause, or that they may some way or other serve their worldly Interest, by propagating an Error which they don't really believe; yet I humbly conceive, these can't be the Persons intended by the Apostle in this Scripture, for the *Heretick* is there represented as inconsistent with himself; and the Inconsistency or Contrariety of his Sentiments is suppos'd to be known, and is alledg'd as an Aggravation of the Charge, on which his *Rejection* or Expulsion from that *religious Society* is founded. But did ever any Man propagate  
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one Doctrine, and tell the World he believ'd another, so that he might in this Sense be convicted as an Hypocrite? Therefore if the World can't be suppos'd to know this by his own Confession, and the Church cou'd not censure him for it, but upon sufficient Evidence; or if they can't be suppos'd to know it, but by divine Inspiration, which 'tis true they were favour'd with in that Age, in which among other extraordinary Gifts, they had that of *discerning of Spirits*; yet 'tis greatly to be question'd, whether ever they proceeded against any one by such extraordinary Intimations, without some apparent matter of Accusation, which was known by those who had not this extraordinary Gift. For if they had had a Liberty to proceed against Persons in such a way, why did not our Saviour reject *Judas*, who was one of that Society which attended on his Ministry, when he knew that he was *self-condemned* in a most notorious Degree? Yet we find he did not, and the Reason doubtless was, because he design'd that his Church in succeeding Ages, shou'd in all their judicial Proceedings, lay hold of other Evidence, which might be easily known by all, when they expell'd any one from their Communion.

BESIDES, if this be sense of the *Text*, and the Ground on which Persons are to be rejected, then no one can be known to be *self-condemn'd* now; for we have no such extraordinary Intimations thereof, since miraculous Gifts are ceased, and is there any thing instituted as an Essential in the Government of the Church, which could not be put in Practice, except in the *Apostolic Age*? If so, then having Recourse to extraordinary *discerning of Spirits*, as a Foundation of this Procedure, will not serve the Purpose for which 'tis alledg'd.

It must therefore be concluded, that the Person here said to be *self-condemn'd*, was not deem'd



so, because he pretended to hold that Faith which he really deny'd ; but because his present professed Sentiments contradicted, what he had before pretended to hold, which was a Term on which he was admitted into the Church, and therefore they took Cognisance of his *Self-condemnation*, in as much as his present Errors contain'd a Contradiction to that Faith which he once professed in common, with the rest of that Society, when he was first admitted a Member of it.

## § VIII.

SINCE every particular *Church* or *Society of Christians*, is oblig'd to adhere to the most important or *fundamental Articles of Faith*, the denying or not believing of them, disqualifies for *Church-Communion*. In civil Societies every distinct Body is govern'd by its own Laws, which are sometimes arbitrarily agreed on ; in which Case they may be alter'd at Pleasure, and an Assent to, or Compliance therewith, is so far a Term of Communion, as it is insist'd on, or dispens'd with ; in this Case it is not necessary that all the Members should agree in their Sentiments ; 'tis sufficient if their Actions don't tend to subvert the Order, fix'd on and agreed to by the Body. But 'tis far otherwise in a religious Society, for that is not only to conform it self to the *Laws of Society*, contain'd in the *Law of Nature*, whereby the Liberty and Rights of Mankind are secur'd : But the highest and most valuable Ends are design'd thereby, and a peculiar Glory is put upon it, in which Respect, it is distinguish'd from all other Societies ; and those Methods of Government wherein it differs from them, are to be found only in *divine Revelation* ; from whence we learn, that the distinguishing Character of every Member thereof, is his *professed Subjection* to CHRIST, and Consent to be govern'd by his *Laws* contain'd therein ; this renders  
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it a Church of CHRIST, without which it would not be own'd by him, much less entitled to his special Care and Presence. These Laws which have a higher Sanction than what is merely human, are such as Men can neither alter nor dispense with, by admitting any into that Society, without insisting on a professed Compliance therewith, as a Term of Communion. And they are, in general, such as tend to advance the *Mediator's* Glory, as fit to be their *King* and *Lord*, who has an absolute Sovereignty over the Consciences of Men; this divine Glory was ascrib'd to our Saviour by *Peter* in his Confession, *Thou art CHRIST, the Son of the living GOD*; and this, not the Person of *Peter*, as Protestants generally maintain against the Papists, is *that Rock* on which, as our Saviour says, the *Church is built*.

MOREOVER, those Laws which are immediately subservient to *Divine Worship*, which determine the *Object* and *Manner* how it is to be perform'd, in Compliance wherewith Salvation and all divine Privileges are to be expected, they are to be submitted to, and whatever Doctrines are necessary thereunto, are to be known and believed, or the End of the Institution of such *Religious Societies* cannot be attain'd. This a Church is suppos'd to do, or it forfeits its Relation to, and Interest in CHRIST, and all the Glory which is put upon it, as a Christian or *Religious Society*.

AND if the *whole Church* is oblig'd to embrace that which is professedly the *common Faith*, then every *Member* is oblig'd. This is obvious, for in all Societies, especially where no Dispensation is given to particular Persons, that which is a Term of Communion to one, is so to another, whether the qualifying Condition be *arbitrarily* or *necessarily* impos'd. If there be certain *Pacta conventa* establish'd by Consent, as in *civil Societies*, or if some

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things are enjoin'd by the Will of a *Legislator*, these are equally Terms of Communion to all.

AND that this holds good in a *Religious Society*, is plain, since that is to be governed by certain *Laws* which CHRIST has establish'd, as necessary to attain the most valuable Ends of Church-Communion. These *Laws* are professedly comply'd with by every Member thereof; and indeed, his Relation to the Society, is an implicit Declaration of his Compliance therewith. He is therefore supposed, and does, as it were, profess to believe, those Doctrines on which the Church is built, which we call *Fundamental Articles of Faith*, and are necessary to the right Performance of that Worship, which is the highest End of Church-Communion. If therefore he should appear to deny or disbelieve those Doctrines, which he is supposed, or pretends to embrace, he would incur the Guilt of Insincerity; and the Church at the same time, in allowing him to remain in the same Relation to it as before, would not be altogether Guiltless.

*Obj.* It will be objected that a Church, or religious Society, may dispense with the Denial of some Doctrines in particular Persons, which the greater Number of them embrace: Therefore that which is a Term of Communion to one, may not be so to another; and therefore there is no Insincerity or Guilt contracted on either side. And that there must be a Dispensation allowed to some for Difference in Sentiments, is plain, because otherwise all must be supposed to be of a Mind, which can hardly be said of any two Persons in the World.

ANSWER, To this it may be reply'd, That tho' it be granted that the Members of a Society can't in all things be of the same Mind, since Men's Sentiments differ as much as their Countenances; yet this don't overthrow what we contend for, viz. That there ought to be an Harmony or A-



greement in all things which are professedly *Terms of Communion*. Now my having in all Respects the same Sentiments with every Member of the religious Society to which I stand related, can't be a Term of Communion, since it is an impossible Condition; neither is there any Profession made of such an Agreement, nor is it absolutely necessary to attain the Ends of Church Communion, as that Agreement in those Doctrines which we have been considering is supposed to be. The Laws to be submitted to, and Doctrines to be embrac'd, are such as are not *arbitrarily* impos'd by the Will of the Society; in which Case they might be dispens'd with as to particular Persons: But such as are enjoin'd by the Authority and Will of the *Divine Legislator*, which therefore none can dispense with, unless you suppose that HE can. And that HE cannot dispense with those things which are essential to it, as a *Religious Society*, appears from their necessary Tendency to answer the great Ends thereof, which cannot be answer'd any other way, or at least we know not of any, and therefore we cannot determine what he may or will dispense with as to what relates to those Laws which are subservient to religious Worship. Thus if our owning, admiring, and adoring the divine Glory, as discovered in Scripture, and attaining Salvation in the Way therein prescrib'd, be the great Reason of the Institution of *Religious Societies*, these Ends can't be attain'd but by our knowing and believing those Doctrines which are subservient thereunto. And then the Denial or Disbelief thereof can't be dispens'd with; not *by Men*, for they are not Lords of the Divine Law; nor by CHRIST himself, for he cannot detract from his own Glory.

BUT this will farther appear, if we consider a Church as a *worshipping Assembly*. All *social Worship* is suppos'd to be *uniform*, especially as to what con-

cerns the *Essentials* thereof. For if a Society is not agreed herein, and in particular as to the Person whom they worship, or how and by what Rule it is to be perform'd, it is the Seat of Confusion, and acts not as a Body of Christians who approve themselves to God, who searches the Heart; to whose all-seeing Eye the Confusion and Contradiction that is in his Worship, plainly appears, how much soever conceal'd the Sentiments of some may be from Men. And how little this deserves the Name of Religion, will easily be observ'd; for what a Reproach must it be to a *Religious Society*, if we consider the Consequence of differing Sentiments, with respect to *Fundamental Articles of Faith*, and the Influence they have on the *Worship* perform'd, when one advances the Glory of God, and another at the same time dethrones and casts Contempt on Him; one worships the *Son* and *Spirit*, as supposing the same divine Glory is due to each of the *Persons* in the *Godhead*; another, as the just Consequence of his denying their Divinity, while pretending to join in the same Worship, has a secret Abhorrence of what they who differ from him are doing, as supposing them guilty of Idolatry. Or if a Church think fit to profess their Faith, as the *Church of England* does, in a Form of Words which they apprehend consonant to Scripture, as suppose it be in the Words of the *Nicene* or *Athanasian Creed*; one understands it without the Help of Criticism, in the most known Sense thereof; but another, who denies the Faith contain'd therein, as much as he abhors the Name of a *Creed*, is forc'd to use abundance of Evasions, and distinguish away the Sense of the Words; so that while he confesses the same Faith in Words, his Sense of them is not only contradictory to the rest of the Assembly, but to the common Sense of Christians using the same Words.

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AGAIN, suppose one Member of a *Religious Society* owns CHRIST, in worshipping him as a *Surety*, and to have made Satisfaction to divine Justice for the Sins of Men, and acknowledges him *the Lord of our Righteousness*; from whose infinite Merit he expects to obtain Remission of Sins, and adores him with the greatest Thankfulness, as having done this for him: But another sees no Necessity of expecting Remission of Sins, and Salvation this way, or of owning him under that Character. Or if, while one prays for the divine Power of the *Holy Ghost* to be exerted as acknowledging him to be the Author of *Sanctification*, and another thinks there is no need of it, since there is nothing supernatural in this Work which requires his Agency; or suppose one thinks that *Divine Revelation* is the only Rule of Worship, and another that *natural Religion* is sufficient, and therefore that he is not oblig'd to thank GOD for his great Favour in giving him the Scripture, how displeasing wou'd such Worship be to GOD! How void of Harmony! as tho' there was nothing certain or determinate in Religion, which must be insisted on as a Term of Christian Communion in those Acts of Worship; or as tho' Persons who pretend to have Communion with one another, and as such worship GOD together, may so widely differ in those things in which divine Worship is so much concern'd; and yet their Worship be irreprovable, and the *Religious Society* that joins together in it, blameless.

#### C O R O L L A R Y.

*The refusing to admit, or excluding one who denies the most important Articles of Faith, from Church Communion, is not to be reckoned injurious Treatment nor charg'd on the Church as a Crime. A real Injury, which is founded in Injustice, does not consist in denying a Person that which is reckoned a Privilege,*



vilege, but in denying or taking it away, supposing him to have a Right to it. Now 'tis certain, that no one has a Right to the Privileges of a *Religious Society*, but those who have a *Warrant* to claim them from CHRIST, the Lord and Head thereof: And we must not suppose that he will give such a *Warrant* or Right to any who are unqualify'd for them. Since therefore the denying *Fundamental Articles of Faith*, disturbs the Harmony, confounds the Worship, sullies the Beauty, and casts a Reproach on a *Religious Society*, and prevents the Persons attaining the End of social Worship, it must needs disqualify him for Communion, and argue that he has no *Warrant* from CHRIST to claim this Privilege. And therefore, as it would be Unfaithfulness to him to grant it: So the Denial thereof does not in the least invade the Right or Property of the unqualified Person, and by Consequence has not the least Appearance of Injustice, nor ought to be deem'd an Injury, however 'tis often resented as such.

As for *Exclusion from Church Communion*, this may be consider'd as design'd to reclaim him who is thus dealt with, as well as to assert the Honour of CHRIST, whose divine Glory he denies; and therefore 'tis an Instance of *Love* to him who is turn'd aside from the Faith which he once profess'd. Or if it be considered as an Act of *Justice*, 'tis no other than denying him a forfeited Right, which cannot contain in it any thing criminal, for by the same Reason a *Religious Society* is chargeable with a Crime, when it excludes any one from its Communion for the *vilest Practices*: For tho' the Causes of Exclusion are various, and one more aggravated than another, yet they all agree in this, that they denominate a Person to have no Right or Claim to what he is depriv'd of, as being forfeited by him: If therefore denying the *Fundamental*

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*tal Articles of Faith* contains in it such a Forfeiture, as has been already proved, this Proceedure against him is not to be reckon'd *injurious*. And that it don't necessarily contain in it an Instance of *Uncharitableness*, will further appear, if we consider that a Person's Welfare in this, and the other World, don't consist in, or absolutely depend on his Relation to a Church; there is an higher Tribunal, at which he is to be tried, and a Righteous Judge to whom an Appeal may be made, by whose Sentence he stands or falls. As to what respects human Censures, they don't render a Person farther from the Mercy and Favour of GOD than he was before; they carry in them, indeed, the Nature of a Reproof: Now Reproofs don't increase a Person's Guilt or Misery, as he is an Offender against the *Almighty*, but are rather a Means to extricate him from it. And as such Dealings ought to proceed with the greatest Tenderness and Compassion, without Censoriousness in fastning Crimes on him destitute of Proof; nor with Malice and Revenge, as tho' 'twas not the Cause of GOD that was herein pleaded; but with a Spirit of Love and Meekness, as desiring nothing more than his Good; and if so managed they ought not to be deem'd *Uncharitable*, nor exasperate or draw forth the Passions of those who fall under them.

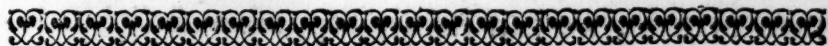








REMARKS  
ON THE  
BEHAVIOUR of the *JEW*S,  
AND  
*Primitive CHRISTIANS*  
IN THEIR  
CENSURES,  
And shewing what is *Uncharitableness, &c.*



PART II.

**H**AVING in the *first Part*, laid down some *Propositions* relating to those *Articles of Faith* which are subservient to *divine Worship*; and shewn how the contrary Errors, subversive thereof, disqualifie for Church Communion: We proceed to  
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consider the Behaviour of Men towards one another, as conform'd to, or dissonant from, the Rules of Justice and Moderation, whereby we may fix a just *Idea* of *Charity*, and determine who may truly be charg'd with making a Breach upon it.

THE *first* Debt we owe, as Christians, is to *Truth*, whereby we proclaim His Glory, and testify our Subjection to Him, whose revealed Will is the Standard thereof. The *next* is to *Mankind*, who have an equal Right to claim the Duties of *Charity*, Meekness, and Forbearance from us, 'as we have to expect 'em from them.

AND since Men may be consider'd under a twofold Capacity; either as *Members of a Religious Society*; or as *united by the common Bond of Humanity*, hence arises a twofold *Idea* of *Charity*, both of which will come under our present Consideration.

WE begin therefore to consider it as exercis'd or neglected by *Religious Bodies of Men*. These are supposed to embrace the same Faith, and to be carrying on the same Design, *viz.* the propagating the Name and Interest of GOD in the World and their common Salvation; and therefore they ought to maintain an Unity of Affection, thereby to strengthen the Hands of each other, and so answer the End of their mutual Relation.

BUT when we consider the Corruption of human Nature, we can hardly suppose a *Religious Society*, but we must allow that there may be *Offences* given by some of its Members; and we can scarce conceive of Men as defective in Knowledge, as well as often byas'd by *Passion* and *Prejudice*, but we must withal suppose that there is a *Liableness* to misjudging, or taking Offence where 'tis not really given.

AND since we must allow the Church a Right to judge of the *Qualification* of its Members for  
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that Relation, it will also follow, that they may be mistaken in judging about Persons offending, whom they apprehend to deserve Exclusion from their Communion; which is the main Ground and Reason of that *Uncharitableness* which is often found in *Religious Societies*.

THIS is more notorious, when they pretend to determine a Man's *future State* by his *present Sentiments* and Behaviour, and at the same time to shut the Door of the Church, and Heaven it self against him. This is to deal with Men as tho' they infallibly knew the secret Counsels of GOD, and who are eventually excluded from his Mercy, which is certainly beyond our Province to do, seeing *He gives no Account of his Matters to any one*; and it is at the same time to preclude all those Methods which are to be us'd to reclaim, as what must necessarily be vain and fruitless, which is contrary to the Apostle's Advice, *2 Tim. ii. 25. In Meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if GOD, peradventure, will give them Repentance, to the acknowledging of the Truth.* Must we conclude that because GOD will not save a Person whilst led away by pernicious Errors or Practices, that therefore he will not deliver him from them? Or is there no Difference between what we apprehend to be at present very *dangerous*, and what is altogether *desperate* and irretrievable?

THE more common Instances of this Temper, as discovering it self in the private Resentment of particular Persons, not pretending to a divine Authority for it, will be consider'd when we have first taken a View of it as usher'd in with awful Solemnity, and enforc'd with a terrible Sanction, as the deliberate Act of a *Church* dealing with those who offend either by corrupt Doctrines or Practices.

THAT some Instances of Resentment are to be express'd against such, and particularly that they



are to be excluded from *Church Communion*, has been before prov'd; it being the undoubted Right of every *Religious Society* to use all proper Methods to keep it self uncorrupt: But that which is chargeable with *Uncharitableness* is the Abuse hereof, by those who, as it were, set themselves in the Room of CHRIST, take the Scepter out of his Hand, or act as tho' they had the Disposal of the State of Men in both Worlds.

THE *Scriptures* that are alledg'd to give Countenance to this Temper are such as speak of GOD's *binding or loosing in Heaven, that which is bound or loos'd on Earth*; or *remitting or retaining Sin*, agreeably to the Sentence of the Church: See *Mat. xvi. 19,* and *Chap. xviii. 18.* and *John xx. 23.* Which *Texts*, if we suppose they refer to the Sentence of *Excommunication*, yet they give no Countenance to the Opinion, or Practice founded thereon, of those who assert the *Infallibility of the Church*, in their Determinations concerning them who offend; or that GOD is oblig'd to act agreeably to what is done on Earth, whether just or unjust; which wou'd divest him of his Sovereignty, and argue him to be under an Obligation to approve of what may be most vile, or sometimes to punish what is agreeable to his own Will, tho' not apprehended so by the Judgment of the *Church*. This Mistake has led many into unwarrantable Excesses in their Proceedings against Men charg'd with perverse Doctrines or Practices. The *Church of Rome* have first injuriously made Men Offenders, and pretended them to be avow'd Enemies to Religion, while they have been pleading its Cause according to Truth, and then dealt with them as such; and when in other Cases the Crimes have been such as that any Society pretending to Religion might justly withdraw from the Persons charg'd therewith, they have notwithstanding gone beyond their Line, as

maintaining that none who die out of the Enclosure of the *visible Church* can be saved, and concluding that GOD will certainly pass a Sentence agreeable to theirs. And if the Offender has not been excluded in a formal Process out of the Church while *living*, they excommunicate him when *dead*, as in the Instance of *Bucer* and *Fagius* in *England*; which Abuse crept into the Church about the middle of the *sixth Century*, being establish'd by the *second Council* at *Constantinople*, and was two or three *Centuries* before that, a disputable Point among particular Persons; therefore *Chrysostom* \* argues against it, and that with just Reason, alledging, that to their own Master they stand or fall; for what has a Church to do with those who are no longer its Members, nor under its Jurisdiction?

BUT passing by this, which is so notorious a Corruption of Church Discipline, we find in the earlier Ages of the Church, that she has endeavoured to render this Sentence formidable by the *Anathemas* annexed thereunto, either taken from the *Jewish* Form of *Excommunication*, or from those two Places in the *New Testament*, *Gal. i. 8.* *1 Cor. xvi. 22.* where the Word *Anathema* is used, viz. in the one against those *who preach another Gospel*, and in the other, against those *who love not the Lord Jesus*; to the latter of which *Maranatha* is added, to put the Person in Mind of the *Lord's coming*, when the Threatning contain'd therein shall be fully executed.

BUT that we may be a little more particular in our Enquiries about the *Origin* thereof, before we come to consider how 'twas abused by the *Christian Church*, we may observe that 'tis doubted by some, whether *Excommunication* was practised by

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\* Tom. v. De Anath. Sermo.

the Church before the *Babylonish Captivity*; and these suppose that 'twas then us'd as a necessary Expedient to punish those whom they cou'd not try and condemn as they had done before, by the Authority of the civil Magistrate; whereas in foregoing Ages, when they were in their own Land, and their civil and religious Polity remain'd unbroken, their Ecclesiastick and forensick Laws were so interwoven, and the same Persons oftentimes being Judges of both, that there was no need of any Ecclesiastical Punishments distinct from the Civil.

BUT tho' this be allow'd, yet there are some Expressions in the *Books of Moses*, relating to the Government of the Church before the Captivity, which seem to import, that besides the Punishments inflicted by the civil Magistrate, for Crimes that were against the moral Law, or contain'd in them a Breach made upon the civil Constitution, which were principally corporal; there was another sort of Punishment inflicted, by which Persons were depriv'd of those Privileges which were more especially Religious, which they were favour'd with as a *Church* under the special Care of GOD, as his peculiar People. This was inflicted for their neglecting to adhere to those Ordinances by which they were, in an eminent Degree, distinguish'd from the World.

THE most general Expression by which the greatest Punishments, whether Civil or Ecclesiastical, are denoted is *cutting off*, which is to be taken in various Senses. Thus sometimes GOD threatens to do it immediately himself, and that with some extraordinary Indications of his Displeasure; *Eating of Blood* has this Threatning denounc'd against it, Lev. xvii. 10. *I will even set my Face against that Soul that eateth Blood, and will cut him off from among his People.* And as for those that gave their  
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*Seed to Molech*, who were punish'd with Death, and the People were to stone them with Stones; yet besides this 'tis added, *I'll set my Face against that Man, and cut him off from amongst his People*; and the same is said of those that turn'd after such as had familiar Spirits and Wizards, which was a Crime that deserv'd Death; and G O D threatens to inflict it himself, to wit, if the Magistrate was negligent in performing his Duty, by putting the Laws in Execution against them, See *Levit. xx. 2, 6*. In this G O D condescends to display his Glory in a miraculous Way, agreeably to that Form of Government which was *Theocratical*; and as some *Jewish Writers* think, he often cut off Persons by his own immediate Hand, for many other Crimes which in their own Nature deserv'd Death, when there was not so full a Proof thereof, as to be punishable by Men.

AGAIN, when it is said, *That Soul shall be cut off from among his People*, as it often implies a Direction given to the civil Magistrate, in dealing with Offenders which deserv'd Death: So, I humbly conceive, it is sometimes to be understood, as containing G O D's Warrant and Law given to that Church, to separate Persons from their Communion, in Cases where Death was not inflicted by the Hands of the civil Magistrate; and it is more especially to be understood in this Sense, when 'tis threatned as a Punishment for the Neglect of some Act of divine Worship, or not duly observing some Rites or Ceremonies which were necessary to the right Performance thereof; this was doubtless a Sin, and was sufficient to forfeit the Privilege of being a Member of that *Religious Society*, since every one who had a Right to attend on their Worship, must perform it according to the divine Prescription, or else be excluded from it. Accordingly when being cut off, is threatned for such an Offence (e-  
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specially if not committed *presumptuously*, and in Contempt of God's Institution; in which Case sometimes Death was inflicted by the Hand of the civil Magistrate, as in *Numb. xv. 30, to 35.*) then the Meaning thereof is, that he shall be *separated from the Congregation by Excommunication*, or declar'd incapable of joining in those religious Duties which were perform'd by them as a *Church*, under the immediate Government and Protection of the *Almighty*, inasmuch as he refuses to perform them in the way which was prescrib'd by God, and practis'd by the Church. In this Sense I conceive it is to be taken in *Gen. xvii. 14.* *The uncircumcised Man-child, &c. shall be cut off from his People, he has broken my Covenant.* They who suppose that the Punishment here threatned is Death, are oblig'd to conclude, that the *Man-Child* here spoke of is one that is adult; and if such a one did not willingly submit to this Ordinance, he was to be *cut off*, that is, slain. But 'twill be hard to prove, that since the *Man-Child* spoke of, *v. 12.* who was to be circumcised, was one of eight Days old, that in this *14<sup>th</sup> v.* it should only signify one that is adult. Many there are who being sensible of this Inconvenience, in explaining this Scripture, apprehend that the Punishment of *cutting off* was not to be inflicted on the Child being but eight Days old, but on the Parent; which must be suppos'd, if by it we are to understand Death: But if otherwise, we understand by it a declaring the uncircumcised Child deprived of the Privileges of an *Israelite*, which it was to be admitted to by Circumcision, then 'tis not absurd to suppose, that it may be the unhappy Subject thereof, in whom there is an Instance of a Breach made upon God's Covenant, thro' its Parent's Default, who is, at the same time, chargeable with Guilt, as being the Occasion of it.

MOREOVER,

MOREOVER, there are other Instances of Persons being liable to be *cut off* from the *Church* for not observing the Laws which were annexed to some parts of divine Worship; as if any one did *eat leavened Bread* during the Week in which the Festival of the *Passover* was celebrated, *Exod. xii. 19.* 'Tis also threatned, in case they attended on any holy Ordinances, and in particular on the Sacrifice of *Peace-Offerings*, and eat the Flesh thereof, being *unclean*, *Lev. vii. 20, 21.* In which, and some other Instances that might be mentioned, I humbly conceive, that, by a Person's being *cut off*, we are to understand his being denied the Privileges claim'd by the Members of *that Church*; as, in some respects, every unclean Person was, while his Uncleanness remain'd upon him.

I MIGHT further argue, that if a Person's being *cut off*, always signified his being punish'd with Death by the Hands of the Civil Magistrate, then the Apostle *Paul*, who uses the *Jewish* Mode of speaking, (and the same Word, which we are considering, so frequently us'd in the *Old Testament*) *Gal. v. 12. I wou'd they were even cut off which trouble you,* he must be suppos'd to desire, or rather advise, that they *should be cut off by Death*; which Advice, at that time, was impracticable, considering the posture of Affairs, when the Civil Magistrate would not, and the Church could not, inflict corporal Punishments on those that troubled them; therefore the Words contain a Direction to them to *cut off* or *separate* from their *Communion* those who disturbed the Peace or Purity thereof. This therefore is sometimes the Sense of that Word in the *Books of Moses*; and from hence it evidently appears, that the *Jewish Church* practis'd *Excommunication* against those who deserv'd it, before the *Babylonish Captivity*, tho' free from those many Abuses thereof, which according to

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the account of *Jewish Writers* were introduc'd by that Church in after Times.

As to their Government during the *Captivity*, so little is said of it, that I think it can't be determin'd whether they then practis'd *Excommunication* or not. Indeed, in *Ezra's* Time, after their return from *Babylon*, we read of it with an additional Circumstance, not mention'd any where else in Scripture, of *Confiscation of Goods* attending it; thus it was proclaim'd, *Ezr. x. 8.* that whosoever wou'd not come to *Jerusalem* to testify his Consent to put away the strange Wives, that many of 'em had married, within three Days, *all his Substance should be forfeited, and He separated from the Congregation of those that had been carried away:* This indeed seem'd a new Law, and carried in it the Appearance of Severity; but 'tis sufficiently plain, that this Conduct may be justified in *Ezra*, tho' it don't follow, that Countenance is hereby given to the Practice of those who took Umbrage from it in *following Ages*, when adding corporal Punishments to *Excommunication*; for there was something peculiar in this Case, and he might possibly be warranted herein, by some immediate divine Intimation relating thereunto. But without having recourse to that, which is not directly mention'd in the Text, we may consider, that there was an express Law of GOD, which forbid the *Israelites* to join in Affinity with foreign and idolatrous Nations, *Deut. vii. 3.* *Thou shalt not make Marriages with them, thy Daughter thou shalt not give unto his Son, nor his Daughter shalt thou take unto thy Son:* This was the particular Grievance complain'd of at that time, and was like to have a fatal Tendency to introduce Idolatry into their Worship, as *Nehemiah* observes it had done in *Solomon's* time, occasion'd by his *marrying many strange Wives*, *Chap. xiii. 25, 26.* And 'tis ob-

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serv'd, that they had not only been guilty of this Sin, when their Temptation to it was greater, while in *Babylon*; but even since they return'd from thence. Thus *Ezra* in his Prayer confesses it as an Iniquity that abounded at that time, after they had been bless'd with so eminent a Deliverance, and seems jealous of the People's Inclination to continue in it, *Chap. ix. 10, 13, 14.* Besides this, we may consider that He had a very extensive Commission from *Artaxerxes*, to inflict such like Punishments on those who obstructed the Work of Reformation which he was engag'd in, *Chap. vii. 26. Whosoever will not do the Law of thy God, and the Law of the King, let Judgment be executed speedily upon him; whether it be unto Death, or to Banishment, or to Confiscation of Goods, or to Imprisonment;* the Law of GOD, which was to be observed, it's call'd the *King's Law*, because its Obligation was to be farther enforc'd by his Authority; and *Ezra* was to vindicate the Honour thereof, by various Methods of inflicting corporal Punishments, among which, this of *Confiscation of Goods* was one, so that herein he did no more than fulfil his Commission. The Punishment indeed may seem hard, but the thing enforc'd hereby was such, as milder Arguments probably might not have perswaded them to comply with; and then GOD's Judgments would have follow'd, till he had consum'd 'em, so that *there should be no Remnant nor escaping.* Besides, the People had before this Proclamation was issued out, *covenanted* and agreed by *Oath*, that they would put away their strange Wives; *Ezra x. 3, 5.* Therefore when he saw them, notwithstanding this, backward thereunto, being invested with the Authority of a Magistrate, *v. 4.* he takes Courage, and issues forth this Order. 'Tis plain from hence, that this was an extraordinary Case, and therefore when the same

was practis'd in following Ages, without the like Warrant and Occasion, 'twould be very hard to vindicate the Justice thereof.

AND this may lead us to consider the Practice of *Excommunication* among the *Jews* after *Ezra's* Time, as we have an Account of it from *their own Writers*. We find that there were various kinds or degrees thereof; \* *One* of which only abridg'd the Person who fell under it of some Privileges which *that Church* enjoy'd, but not of all; and this was little more than what the *Christian Church* call'd ἀφορισμὸς, *Separatio, Abstentio, &c.* This was inflicted for some Offences which can hardly be call'd Crimes, but as they were deem'd so by the Pride, Caprice, and undue Resentment of a degenerate, and at that time, in many respects, ill govern'd Church.

THEY had also *another* Degree of *Excommunication* †, which carried in it more of Terror, by reason of the many *Anathemas* annexed to it, containing

\* This they call נִדְּוִי NID-  
DUI; see *Lightfoot, Hor. Heb.*  
& *Talm.* in 1 Cor. v. 5. where  
he assigns from *Rabbinical Wri-*  
*ters*, twenty four Reasons for  
inflicting this Censure, many  
of which are trifling, and hard-  
ly deserve a Recital; and, as  
that learned Author observes,  
it was to remain in Force thirty  
Days, during which time, if  
the Person repented not, 'twas  
to be laid on him thirty Days  
more; and after that, in case of  
Obstinacy, another thirty Days,  
and then they proceeded to a-  
nother degree of *Excommunication*,  
which they apprehended would  
terrify him with a Witness, by

denouncing many *Curses* against  
him, as tho' they design'd to  
make *Anathemas* cheap and  
contemptible with Men less in-  
clin'd to Bigotry than the most  
of 'em were. See a particular  
Account hereof in that Chapter  
of *Lightfoot* now referr'd to,  
where other things are menti-  
on'd, that argue a great degree  
of Detestation, as not only that  
they are forbidden to eat or  
drink with him, but to come  
within four Cubits of him, who  
fell under this Censure.

† This they call חֶרֶם CHE-  
REM, the same which in the  
*Christian Church* is call'd *Ana-*  
*thema*. And some, who treat of  
this



taining a great Abuse and Perversion of the Design of that Law, relating to the *Curses* that were to be denounc'd on Mount *Ebal*, mention'd in *Deut.* xxvii. which was not design'd as a Form to be us'd in *Excommunication*, but as an Expedient to prevent those Sins which expos'd to the divine Wrath. And tho' they pretend to have a Warrant for this, taken from *Deborah* and *Barak's* cursing *Meroz*, *Judg.* v. 23. or from *Joshua's* denouncing a Curse on him that should rebuild *Jericho*; *Josh.* vi. 26. yet this does not give Countenance to their Proceedings; for certainly we must distinguish between *Anathemas* denounc'd by immediate divine Direction, by those who had the Spirit of Prophecy; and such as were denounc'd by them who were altogether destitute thereof.

THAT they practic'd this Method of *Excommunication*, by denouncing Curses against those who were struck with it, is very obvious to all that are conversant in their *Writings*; and also that these *Execrations* were not only denounc'd against those who had committed the vilest Crimes, such as open Blasphemy, or Idolatry, &c. but even for *Obstinacy*, or Contempt of the lesser *Excommunication* before describ'd, which was often inflicted for

this Matter, suppose that they had yet a third degree of *Excommunication* call'd שְׁמַמַּתָּה SCHAMMATHA, which they think is the same with *Maranatha*. Where this Sentence was pass'd the Person was deem'd liable to temporal and eternal Punishments. But the other, or second Degree of *Excommunication* is so full of Cursing, that little more can be added to it; therefore some think the Word

SCHAMMATHA is deriv'd from SCHAMATH *separavit*; and so it is the same with the first Degree, call'd, as was before hinted, NIDDUI; and therefore the whole of this Matter is contain'd in what the *Christian Church* calls *Excommunicatio Major* and *Minor*. But this may be left to the Disquisition of those Criticks who are pleas'd with Disputes about things of no Moment.

very *small ones*; as for offering an Affront to a *Wise-man*†, or *Doctor of the Law*; or for speaking disrespectfully of Him when dead; or for not appearing when summon'd to answer to any Accusation before an Ecclesiastical Court of Judicature; or even for not paying pecuniary Debts after a formal Process in Law††.

THE *Curses* they denounc'd\* contain'd a horrid Wish, that every thing that is terrible and detested by Men, or which is reckon'd an uncommon Mark of *divine Vengeance*, might fall upon them: They load 'em with all the *Anathemas* which *Moses*, *Barak*, *Elisha*, and others, have laid on those who most deserv'd 'em; and make mention of those *Names* and *Attributes of God*, which might strike the greatest Terror into the Minds of Sinners; and they deliver'd the Person up to be cursed by all the *Angels*, whom they superstitiously suppos'd to have the Government of the various Times and Seasons, Days and Months of the Year; that so, by their means, he might never see an happy Day in this World: And they yet go further, and give him up as one who is to have no part in the

† Thus the *Sanhedrim* excommunicated the Man, whose Eyes our Saviour had open'd, for speaking without that just Decorum and Respect to 'em which they expected, *John ix. 27, 34.* For it was not because he confess'd our Saviour to be CHRIST, pursuant to the Order that they had made amongst themselves, *v. 22.* for he seems as yet to have been a Stranger to him under that Character; only he had a Respect for him,

as having wrought this Miracle, *Verse 36.* See Cocceius ad *Excerpt. Gem. Sanhedrim*, §. IX.

†† See *Vitringa de Synagoga Vet.* pag. 745.

\* See the Form or Instrument us'd when a Person was thus Excommunicated and Anathematiz'd, in *Seld. de Jure, Nat. & Gent. lib. 4. chap. 7.* and *Buxtorf Lex. Talm. in voce CHEREM, sint super ipsum plaga magne & fideles morbi magni & horribiles.*

Resurrection of the Just in the next. To this height of vile *Uncharitableness*, yea, furious Rage and Revenge, was that wretched Generation of Men arriv'd, if Credit may be given to their own *Writers*, that give an Account hereof.

AND as their *Execrations* were void of all *Charity* and Humanity; so their Behaviour towards those who fell under 'em was little better. An Instance of which we have in that irreconcilable Hatred they express'd from Generation to Generation against the *Samaritans*\*, who, as *Rabbinical Writers* tell us, were formally excommunicated and anathematiz'd for their malicious Opposition to the *Jews* in *Nehemiah's* Time, and their Separation from them, when setting up another Temple on Mount *Gerizim*, and establishing another Priesthood to minister in it. That this Hatred between 'em continu'd to our *Saviour's* time, appears from the Woman of *Samaria's* Answer to Him, when desiring her to give him to drink; (whereby it appears, that he did not approve of this unwarrantable Behaviour of the *Jews* towards them) she refers to the morose Treatment which the *Samaritans* generally met with from the *Jews*, who would have no Dealings with 'em, especially in any Instances in which the least degree of Friendship or Obligation were contain'd, *John* iv. 9. *How is it that thou being a Jew, askest Drink of me,*

\* See an Account of the Manner of their *Excommunication*, by sounding three hundred Trumpets, and bringing forth as many Copies of the Law; and how all were prohibited from conversing with them, or admitting any of them to be *Profelytes* to their Reli-

gion; and, which is more, excluding them from any Part in the Resurrection of the Just, in *Lightfoot's Harmony of the four Evan. Part III, on John* iv. 6. and *Josephus's* Account of the first Rise and Occasion thereof, there inserted.

who



who are a Woman of Samaria, for the Jews have no Dealings with the Samaritans †?

AND after Christianity took place in the World, they turn'd their Artillery upon our Saviour and his Followers; to this the Apostle seems to refer, when in 1 Cor. xii. 3. he speaks of some who pretended to speak by the Spirit of God, and yet call'd JESUS accursed; and that they made it their constant Practice to curse the Christians in their Prayers; as well as common Conversation, is sufficiently evident\*.

THUS concerning Excommunication, as it was practis'd in the corrupt Ages of the Jewish Church. To this let me add, that there was another sort of Practitioners in this Art of Cursing, tho' much inferior to the former, and these were the Heathen; whether the Jews borrow'd it from them, or they from the Jews, I will not dispute: That the Heathen had Excommunication among them is very obvious, and not at all strange, since the Law of Nature suggests as much, if abstracted from the Abuse thereof; which we find also among them, as appears by the various Methods of Execration annexed to it, as is observ'd by some of their own Writers ††, who occasionally takes notice of it.

THUS much concerning the Origin and ancient Practice of Excommunication, before it was received in

† How far this Rule extended it self, see Lightfoot Hor. Heb. and Talm. in John iv. 8, 9.

\* See Buxtorf. Lex. Talm. in voce MIN. *eternum exitium illis imprecantur qui a lege Judaica deficiunt ad Christianos*, and Justin Martyr, Dial. cum Tryph. Ἀδιαλείπτως καταρώδε καὶ αὐτῶ ἐκείνῳ καὶ τοῖς ἀπ' αὐτοῦ.

†† Thus Caesar de Bel. Gal. gives an Account how in the Administration of religious Affairs by the Druids, among the ancient Gauls, they excluded those who refus'd to conform to their religious Constitution, from the publick Exercise of their Worship, and particularly from attending on their Sacrifices.

in the like Form, by the *Christian Church*, which we are now to consider; and one would think that this was but a very indifferent Precedent for them to follow, which notwithstanding they did, as will appear from what we shall take occasion further to Remark, concerning the *Abuse of Excommunication* in the *early Ages thereof*. It must indeed be allowed, that their Zeal in Defence of the *Truth and Parity of Religion* is in many other Instances to be commended: But this Practice of affixing *Anathemas* to *Excommunication* cannot be reckon'd an Excellency in them; and indeed some

fices, as those who were reckon'd among the viler Part of Mankind; and others were prohibited from entering into their Houses, or exchanging a Word with 'em, for fear of being defil'd; neither were they allow'd the Benefit of the Law, nor the common Instances of Respect, which others had a Right to. *Si quis aut privatus aut publicus eorum decreto non stetit sacrificiis interdicunt, &c. Lib. 6. §. 12.*

That this was also practis'd among the *Grecians*, may be inferr'd from what we read in *Sophocles*, in *ΟΙΔΙΠΤΥΡ*, lin. 243. & Seq. where he introduces *Oedipus*, pronouncing this Sentence against any one who should refuse to discover his Father's Murtherer, not knowing then that himself was the unhappy Man; that no one should entertain or converse with such an one, or have Communion with him, in Prayer or Sacrifices, nor should admit him to use those Lustrati-

ons that were observ'd in religious Worship; and he proceeds to denounce *Curses* against him as a wicked and *excommunicated* Person, and against those who should entertain or conceal him.

Τὸν ἄνδρ' ἀπαυδῶ  
Μήτ' ἐσθλὰ μὴτε προσφώνῃς  
τινὰ  
Μήτ' ἐν Θεῶν ἐυχαιῶσι μὴτε δῶμασι  
Κουρὸν ποιεῖσθ' μὴτε χερσὶν ἔμυσιν  
ᾠδῶν δ' ἀπ' οἴκων πάντας.

Another Instance of this we have in *Justin, Hist. Lib. v. cap. 1.* who gives an Account of *Alcibiades's* being accus'd for divulging the *Mysteries of Ceres*, and that for this he fell under the Displeasure of those who had the Management of the Affairs of Religion; and accordingly 'tis said, *Inde non damnatum se tantum verum etiam Diris per omnium sacerdotum Religionis devotum cognovit.*

of the *Fathers*, who had more Mildness in their Temper, seem to blame it, especially as containing too much Severity and Injustice in its Application. Thus *Chrysostom* † observes, that it ought rather to be affixed to *Doctrines* than *Persons*; or at least the Person must be suppos'd finally impenitent, or never dispos'd to embrace the Faith of the Gospel; and therefore they cannot be excus'd from *Uncharitableness*, who have often us'd it without due Regard had thereunto. Thus 'tis observ'd by *Socrates* \*, that 'twas commonly us'd by the Church, in the Form of *Excommunication*; and to render the Sentence more dreaded, as determining a Man's State to be hopeless, if he happen'd to die under the Weight thereof (without considering the Fallibility of those who pronounc'd it, and the Possibility of its being misapplied) some have explain'd it in such a way, as tho' the same Regard was to be paid to it as to a *divine Oracle* adjudging Men to everlasting Destruction; and 'twas to be entertain'd with equal Dread and Confusion. Thus *Tertullian* § calls it, an *Anticipation of the future Judgment*; and *Cyprian* ‡ supposes such an one far from a state of Salvation.

AND some have supposed, that the Person when *excommunicated*, was possessed by Satan, which they conclude to be the Sense of the *Apostle* when he speaks of *delivering such an one unto Satan*, in 1 Cor. v. 5. Of this Opinion is the learned *Cave* ||,

† In loco *supr.* citat.

\* Speaking concerning the Church's pronouncing an *Anathema* against *Nestorius*, for his Heresy, says, that this was the usual Form of *Excommunication*; in like cases ἀνεθεματίσας ἔτι γὰρ οἱ χριστιανοὶ καλεῖν εἰώδαμεν τὴν κατὰ τὴν ἐλασφήμεν ψήφον.

§ *Apol. pro Chr. cap. 39. Summum futuri Judicii præjudicium.*

‡ *De Orat. Dom. Timendum est & orandum ne dum quis abstentus separatur à Christi corpore protul remaneat à salute.*

|| *Primitive Christianity, Part III. Chap. 5.*



who argues; that since the Apostles had a Power to inflict extraordinary corporal Punishments for some notorious Offences, as when *Peter* struck *Ananias* and *Sapphira* dead, and *Paul* smote *Elymas* the Sorcerer with Blindness; therefore it may be concluded, that they had a Power to deliver Men over into the Hands of *Satan*, that he might actually seize and take Possession of them; and thereby a mighty Terror might be struck into the Minds of Men, who would be afraid to commit those Crimes whereby they would incur this Censure. And he further argues, that it was more needed at that Time, seeing there was a Defect of *civil coercive Power*; therefore since the Magistrate took no Care to defend the *Church*, God was pleased to do it in this Method, by granting the Apostles this extraordinary Gift.

BUT I humbly conceive, that there never was such a Power granted to the *Church*, how much soever the Necessity of Affairs seem'd to require it. That there was no such thing after the *Apostolic Age*, seems highly probable, which also that excellent Author abovemention'd allows; for certainly if there had, *Justin Martyr*, who liv'd in the middle of the *second Century*, or *Tertullian*, in the *End of it*, or *Origen*, who liv'd in the *beginning of the Third*, or *Cyprian*, who flourish'd in the *middle of that Century*, would have taken some notice of this extraordinary miraculous Punishment attending *Excommunication*; but they are altogether silent about it, which they would hardly have been, had they known any thing of it, since some of them speak in so awful a Manner concerning the *Church's* proceeding against those whom they apprehended to deserve it. And some \* of them

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\* *Justin Martyr*, in *Colloq. cum Tryph.* tells the *Jews*, that the *Church*

take notice of *Her* being favour'd with extraordinary Instances of Miracles, which, it seems, were not wholly ceased in their Time, and assign it as a confirming Evidence of the Truth of the *Christian Religion* against the *Heathen*, laying their Lives at Stake upon it, that they should be enabled publickly to *cast out Devils*, whom their Enemies worshipped as Gods, and force 'em to confess themselves impure Spirits, who were ready to quit their Possession at the Christians Command, in the Name of the true GOD. Thus then it is sufficiently evident, that this extraordinary Punishment did not attend *Excommunication* in the *Ages immediately following the Apostles Time*. And

*Church* in his Time had the Gift of Prophecy; which *Eusebius* in *Hist. Eccl.* L. iv. c. 17. takes Notice of; and therefore doubtless believ'd it to be true in Fact (tho' it is very much to be questioned, whether there was any such thing in the *fourth Century*, in which he liv'd) So *Gregory Nyssen*, and *Basil*, who liv'd a little after *Eusebius*, assert that there were many *Miracles* wrought in the *third Century* by *Gregory of Neo-Cæsarea*, for which Reason he is call'd *Thaumaturgus*; tho' 'tis not improbable that they may be impos'd on in some things which they relate concerning him, especially when they compare him with the Apostles and ancient Prophets, not excepting *Moses* himself, in this respect; and 'tis certain, many things are related of his *Miracles*, which seem too fabulous to obtain Credit; yet there is Ground enough from all that they say, to sup-

pose that he wrought some; and that therefore in his Time they were not wholly ceas'd. See *Greg. Nyss.* in *Vit. Greg. Thaum.* and *Basil de Sp. Sancto*, cap. 29. and *Origen* affirms that in his Time the Christians had a Power to perform many *Miraculous Cures*, and to foretel *Things to come*. See L. 1. *contra Celsi*. Καὶ ἔτι ἔχον τὴν αἰγίαν ἐκείνην, Πνεύματι παρὰ χειρῶν αἰώνων σάζεται ἐξεπαίδει δαίμονας καὶ πολλὰς ἰάσεις ἐπιτελεῖσι καὶ ὁρώσι τινα κατὰ τὸ βέλημα τῶν λόγων περὶ μελλόντων. If this had not been true, *Celsus*, who wanted neither Malice nor Opportunity, would certainly have detected the Fallacy. And had there not been such a Dispensation of *Miracles* in *Tertullian's Time*, he would never have appeal'd to it, and assign'd it as a Proof of the Truth of the *Christian Religion*. See his *Apologet. adv. Gentes*, cap. 23.

indeed

indeed it does not appear to me, that there was any such thing in the *Church* in *their Time*; for it don't follow, that because in two or three Instances corporal Punishments were inflicted by them for notorious Crimes, in which we have no mention of *Excommunication* preceding, that therefore it commonly attended that Ecclesiastical Sentence.

We must therefore enquire, whether there may not be some other Reason assign'd, why the Apostle orders that the Person in the *Church* at *Corinth*, who had been guilty of *Incest*, should be deliver'd to *Satan*, when he gives Instruction concerning his *Excommunication*. I am inclin'd to acquiesce in the more common Sense given of *that Text*, viz. That the Person who had committed this notorious Crime, who was to be cast out of the Church, was said to be deliver'd to *Satan* in as much as he was left in, or consign'd over to, *Satan's Kingdom*: Such a figurative way of speaking is not uncommon either in sacred or prophane Writers. Moreover, *Satan's Kingdom* is sometimes oppos'd to *CHRIST's*; and therefore as *CHRIST* is Lord of his *Church*, they who are within its Enclosure, are entituled to His special Care and Protection, as well as govern'd by the Laws which he has prescrib'd. So *Satan* is describ'd \*, as *the Prince of the Power of the Air*, *the Spirit that worketh in the Children of Disobedience*; *the Prince of this World*; and *the God of this World*; his Empire is call'd the *Power of Darkness*, which we are said to be deliver'd from, when translated into the *Kingdom of CHRIST*. Now then, if *CHRIST's Kingdom* and *Satan's* are thus oppos'd to each other; if *CHRIST* is said to reign in his

\* Eph. ii. 2. Joh. xii. 31. and xiv. 30. 2 Cor. iv. 4.



*Church*, and *Satan*, by divine Permission, to reign over those who are *out of the Church*, and much more over those who are *cast out* of it, for Crimes containing an open Rebellion against the Laws of CHRIST; then it is no Impropriety of Speech to say, that such an one, when cast out of the Church, is *deliver'd to Satan*; that is, his Relation to it being dissolved, he is left in the World or *Satan's Kingdom*; and whereas some suppose, that there were other Consequences which attended this *Exclusion*, viz. that such might be expos'd to a more than ordinary Degree of Temptation, and many of them given up to the Terrors of their own Mind, under a Sense of Guilt improv'd by *Satan* against 'em, 'till GOD was pleas'd to interpose with his restoring Grace, over-ruling this for their Good: I will not deny it, provided it be not extended so far as to contain any thing extraordinary or miraculous in it. This I humbly conceive to be the Sense of the Words in this Scripture; and as so consider'd, it has a more direct Tendency to answer the End there assign'd; viz. *The Destruction of the Flesh, that the Spirit may be sav'd in the Day of the Lord Jesus*, than to suppose a Person *corporally possess'd* by the Devil, which if the more immediate Effect thereof be *Lunacy*, is inconsistent with the actings of Grace; or than to suppose that the Person thus *deliver'd to Satan*, was fill'd with a great degree of *Malice* and *Enmity* suggested by *him*, which can hardly be reckon'd a Means conducive to Salvation, as the Apostle says this *Delivery over to Satan* was to be look'd upon and improv'd as such.

BUT tho' the *Church* had no Power to deliver any up to be corporally possess'd by *Satan*, who rendred themselves liable to its *Censures*, yet they endeavour'd, as was before hinted, to make them as much dreaded as was possible; so that they should conclude

conclude their Condition as bad or worse than if this Evil had befallen them; since 'twas generally supposed that there was little or no hope of Salvation till they had obtain'd Peace with the Church. This made them willing to submit to any Conditions of Humiliation, rather than have this *Bond* (for so 'tis call'd) remain upon them. What but this could have mov'd them to appear before them in filthy Garments, with Sackcloth and Ashes, falling down at the Feet of the *Bishop* or *Presbyters*, and kneeling to the very *Laity* desiring their Prayers; and this done not only by the common People, but *Kings* and *Emperors* must submit to it? The Story of *Theodosius the Great* is well known, who after he was *excommunicated* for having carried his Resentment beyond all the Bounds of Reason and Justice against the Inhabitants of *Thessalonica*, for killing one of his *General Officers* in a Tumult, by giving them up to be murdered and plundered at Discretion by the Soldiery, was forc'd to submit to this Discipline with uncommon Expressions of Sorrow, and Plenty of Tears; first, immuring himself in his Palace, and after that, suffering one of his Courtiers, who offer'd his Service, to go and intercede in his Behalf for the *Church's* *Reconciliation*, and his *Re-admission into its Communion*, but to no Purpose, till he came in Person and humbled himself to such a Degree as tho' he had immediately to do with GOD rather than *Men*; and this he did, as concluding that so long as the Doors of the *Church* were shut against him, he was inevitably shut out of *Heaven*, calling to mind that Scripture, *Whomsoever ye shall bind on Earth, shall be bound in Heaven* \*. And *Eusebius* gives an Instance of the like Humiliation, in order to obtain

\* *Theod. Hist. Eccl. lib. v. cap. 17.*

the Church's Reconciliation, tho' in a Person much inferior to the former; which, as he says, was after all obtain'd with great Difficulty\*\*.

If therefore *Excommunication* struck such a Terror into the Minds of Men, it will naturally lead us to enquire whether 'twas ever inflicted unless for the vilest Crimes, such as were inconsistent with the Profession of Christianity, or a Right to the Favour of God and eternal Life.

IN answer to which it must be considered, that sometimes they pass'd this Sentence for Offences which could hardly be call'd Crimes, even for what scarce deserv'd a Reproof; as will appear to any one who consults the *Canons* of the *Councils* of the *antient Church*, wherein they not only suspended from Church Communion, but did it with the Addition of an *Anathema*; for some things that were below the Church's Notice, and much less deserved so severe a Censure †. This is such a vile

\*\* *Euseb. Hist. Eccl. lib. v. Cap. ult.*

† A Suspension of Persons from Church Communion, whether for a limited time, or not, was often inflicted for very small Crimes: Thus the Council at *Eliberi* in *Can. 50.* suspended any one who should eat with a Jew; and one of the *Gallican Councils* in the sixth Century, viz. *Conc. Matisconens. II.* In *Can. 15.* determine, that if any Lay-man meeting a Clergy-man upon the Road, did not pull off his Hat and bow to him with the greatest Degree of Reverence, or if being on Horseback, did not alight off from his Horse to pay that Respect to him, he was to be suspended from Communion for

as long a time as the Bishop of the Church to which he belong'd pleas'd; which Decree they pretend to be given by the special Dictate of the *Holy Ghost*. This is an indefensible Instance of Pride and Prophaneness, as well as uncharitable and ludicrous; but 'tis not to be wonder'd at, when we consider that 'twas in a very corrupt Age of the Church.

And as Persons were often suspended, so sometimes they were anathematiz'd for very small Offences: Thus the Council held at *Gangra*, in the fourth Century, made 20 *Canons*, to every one of which an *Anathema* is affixed; and in some of 'em what they were displeas'd with



vile Prostitution of a *Word*, than which nothing is more awful as 'tis used in Scripture; so that some have thought they divested it of its common *Idea*, and made it signify no more than a bare *Suspension* or *Exclusion* from the *Communion of the Church*, which is the most favourable Construction that can be put upon it; and one would be inclin'd to think so, were it only us'd occasionally, in which Case it might be thought not to be so well understood as when it is so often used: But when we find it sometimes joined with an *Execration*, and generally annexed to *Censures* denounced for the most heinous Crimes, in which Case the Form is, *let him be excommunicate and anathematiz'd*, how can we otherwise conclude than that it contains the worst that the Church can do against an Offender? 'Tis true, *Socrates* the Church Historian, as has been before observed, says, that the *Sentence of Excommunication* is commonly called *Anathema*; but he adds, that 'tis so called, that is to say, an *Anathema* was annexed to it when denounced against the *first Author or Propagator of some blasphemous Heresy*. And \**Theodoret*, who explains it as importing, that a Person is an *Alien from the common Body of the Church*; yet he applies this Explication of it to the Sense of that Scripture where the Apostle

with and prohibited, can hardly be prov'd to be contrary to the moral Law or Rule of the Gospel; and other things, tho' sinful, don't deserve *Excommunication*, much less such an one. An Instance among others of their denouncing an *Anathema* for an Offence that did not deserve it, may be seen in *Can. 18. of that Council*, where they anathematize those that fast on

the Lord's Day; and the fourth Council at Carthage, held in the fifth Century in *Can. 64.* declare a Person who does so no Catholic, which is little better than to anathematize him. 'Twere endless to give Instances of this Nature, all which tend rather to expose and make the *Censures* of the Church contempt'd than answer any valuable End.

\* In *Comment.* in 1 Cor. xvi. 22.

says, *Let him that loveth not the Lord Jesus be Anathema Maranatha*; which is as much as to say, that it imports something which carries in it a being thrust out of the Church with some uncommon Marks of Infamy and Displeasure. To this it may be added, that 'tis sufficiently evident that the Use hereof in *Excommunication*, was deriv'd from the Custom of the *Jews*, and that it answers to the Word *CHEREM* used by them in the like Case; and what a terrible *Idea* they had of it will be easily observed from what has been before suggested. And to all this let me add, that 'twas never used in that which is called the *lesser Excommunication*, which was inflicted for a certain limited Time, and when that 'twas expired the Person might be re-admitted into the Church with much less Difficulty. If therefore it carries in it the Severity of those *Ecclesiastick Censures*, which were entertain'd with the greatest Dread and Horror, and yet was denounced for *small Offences*, what can we call this but a great Degree of *Uncharitableness*?

AND indeed it can hardly be deem'd any other, if we consider the *Occasion*, tho' the *Anathema* be left out, and only the *lesser Excommunication* denounced, if we consider how awful a thing 'twas reckoned by most in the *third* and *fourth Centuries* to be separated from the Church in what Form soever it was done, as has been before observed.

ANOTHER Reason of Persons being *cut off from the Communion of the Church*, was their refusing to give an Assent to all things that were decreed in some *foregoing Councils*; in which many things were expressed in such a way, that 'twas difficult to understand their Meaning; and many Censures were passed by them on Persons and Things, without a due Regard had to Justice, or the Merits of the Cause. And whereas they condemned

man as *Hereticks*, for holding Sentiments far from being subversive of any *fundamental Article of Faith*; yet he that cou'd not join with 'em herein was equally censur'd\*.

BUT suppose the Crimes *real* and notoriously great, which deservedly exclude a Person from a *Religious Society*, such as scandalous Immoralities or *Heresies* subversive of the *Foundation of our Faith*; yet it was an unjustifiable Extream, and contrary to the Laws of a *Religious Society*, and the good Ends that should be answer'd by such *Censures*, when they depriv'd the Person excommunicated of the *Ordinances* or *Means of Grace*, which should be used for his Recovery, as they seem in some Instances to have done. *The Lord's Supper*, indeed is an Ordinance which those who deserve to be separate from the Communion of the Church, must be supposed to be unqualified for, as being unable to attain the Advantages designed thereby: And it being an Ordinance in which there is Communion, it supposes a Person united to *that Society* wherewith he communicates; therefore they were not to blame for prohibiting an excommunicate Person from partaking of it. But their Censure reach'd farther than this, for they wou'd not admit him to join with them in *Prayer* nor *hearing the Word* †; the former none are to be excluded

\* Vid. Conc. Lateran. A. D. 649. Can. 16. and 17.

† Thus Firmilian, in his Epistle to Cyprian, having complain'd of Stephen, Bishop of Rome his admitting *Hereticks* to Baptism, says, that he might even as well communicate with them in other Parts of Worship, and particularly in *Prayer*,

*Frustra jam dubitat in ceteris quoque consentire eis & particeps esse; ut & simul cum eis conveniat & orationes pariter cum iisdem misceat.* vid. Inter Epist. Cyp. 75<sup>th</sup>. & Tertullian in Apol. 39. speaking concerning Persons excommunicated says, that they not only refus'd to admit 'em to join with the Church in *Prayer*, but



cluded from but such as have committed the *Sin unto Death*, which it is an hard Matter, if not impossible, for any to determine who have not, as the Church had in the *first Age* thereof, an extraordinary *discerning of Spirits*; the latter none are to be excluded from, for the *Heathen* were admitted to come into the Assemblies of the Church, to *hear the Word* in the Apostles time; for such were they who are called *unlearned*, 1 Cor. xiv. 23, 24.

BUT there was another Instance of *Uncharitableness* in their Behaviour towards those who are *excommunicated*, which is beyond all the rest, in that some have determin'd that they should not, if

but that they wou'd have nothing to do with them in what related to *holy Things*. And in the 45th of the *Canons*, falsely attributed to the *Apostles*, which tho' spurious, contain doubtless the Sense of several Councils in the *third and fourth Centuries*; the Compilers thereof depose and condemn those Bishops, Presbyters, or Deacons who pray'd with an *Heretick*; and in the 11th Canon, they are threatened with *Excommunication* who pray'd with an *excommunicate* Person, or so much as spake to him in his own House.

It will farther appear that those who were *excommunicated* were excluded from all *Religious Worship* perform'd in the Church, if we consider the Methods us'd, and the various Steps that were taken in order to its being reconcil'd to those who were cast out of its Communion. At first they were oblig'd to *stand without* the Church-Doors (while the Worship of God was per-

form'd) in the Habit and Posture of *Mourners*; this they were enjoin'd to do for a certain limited time, viz. a Year or more, according to the Nature of the Offence. These were call'd προσκλαίωντες, *Mourners*. Then they were admitted to *hear the Word* with the *Catechumens*, and from that time they were call'd ἀκροάμενοι *Hearers*; and when they had continu'd some time in this Class, they were admitted to join with the Church in *Prayer* and *Singing*, and after that to partake of the *Lord's Supper*: This State of Tryal continu'd sometimes *several Months*, as *Theodosius the Great* submitted to it for *eight Months*, which State of Tryal, and Time of Exclusion, was much shorter than what many were oblig'd to submit to who were very often kept out of the Church for five or ten Years, more or less, according as the *Governors* thereof determin'd. See *Theod. Hist. Eccl. in Loc. supr. citat.*

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the Crime was of an extraordinary Nature, be re-admitted into the Church, tho' they repented of their Sin, but must live and die under the Weight of this *Censure* \*: But this was counted very severe, and therefore 'twas thought fit afterwards a little to relax it †.

THUS we have considered some Instances of the Rigour and Severity in the *Discipline* of the *ancient Church*, which notwithstanding in other Respects was much preferable to any other Religious Societies in *following Ages* in their asserting and defending the Truth of the Christian Religion, and the Divinity of its Author, against a great Variety of Enemies; and many have done this with uncommon Learning and Judgment; the Steadiness and invincible Courage of its *Martyrs* and *Confessors* in suffering Reproach and Death for it; and their mutual Love, where this Occasion did not excite their Zeal to such a Degree as tended to abate it, was uncommon.

WE might have proceeded much farther to consider the many *corporal Punishments* inflicted on Offenders in *following Ages*, when the Church grew

\* Thus the *Elibertine Council*, which was conven'd about the Year 305, in several of their *Canons*, determine that for some Crimes Men should not be admitted to the Communion of the Church in the end of their Lives. Some indeed have excus'd this rigorous Sentence, by supposing that they intended no more hereby but to determine that they shou'd be still excluded from the *Lord's Supper*, tho' not from the Church's Absolution, if desir'd. See *Cave's Prim. Christianity*, Part 3. Chap. 5. Pag. 375. Others

suppose that the Church thought it necessary to deny them a *perfect Reconciliation* at that time, to deter others from committing the like Crimes, but that they did not intend hereby to exclude them from the divine Mercy; which whether they shou'd obtain or no, remain'd a Secret that they did not pretend to determine. Thus *Forbes. Instruct. Hist. Theol. Lib. 12. Cap. 3. §. 18.*

† This was done in the famous Council at Nice in *Constantine's Time*. See *Can. 12.* and *Conc. Carthag. iv. Can. 76.* and *Conc. Arausiac. Can. 3.*

more

more degenerate, and so gone through the many Scenes of *Persecution* practic'd in the *Papacy*, to the great Scandal of the Christian Religion: But I shall proceed no farther in my *Historical Remarks* on the *Uncharitableness* of religious Bodies of Men.

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### Of Uncharitableness in the Conduct of Men towards one another.

HAVING consider'd that there are some *Errors in Doctrine*, which disqualify for *Church Communion*, and how we may judge of them; and that, when discovered, a Church may exclude those who hold them from its *Communion*, without being guilty of *Uncharitableness*; and lastly, what Breaches have been, or may be made upon the Laws of Love and Charity, in the *Manner* or *Occasion* of excluding Persons from *Church Communion*: We now come to consider *this Vice*, as discovering its self in the *Behaviour of particular Persons* towards each other in the more common Instances thereof. And because the *Sentiments*, as well as the *Actions* of Men are liable to Censure; and 'tis no less offensive to be deem'd an *Heretick*, than to be charg'd with *Prophaneness* or *Immorality* in Conversation; we shall have some Regard to both, and lay down several *Propositions*, whereby we may be better able to determine, what may or ought not to be deem'd *Uncharitableness*.

#### §. I.

UNCHARITABLENESS supposes a Person charg'd with what is reckon'd *Criminal*, for it is a tacit *Accusation* brought in against another, which occasions an Alienation of Affection, and tends to dissolve



solve the Bands by which Men are united, and oblig'd to do those Services to each other, which the *Laws of Nature* and *Christianity* direct. There are some peculiar Endowments, which we either are, or ought to be possessed of, as Men or *Christians*, that entitle to such a Degree of Love as the Nature of the Thing requires; and to be destitute of them is attended with *Dishonour*, and in some Instances reckon'd a *Crime*; and to disown our Right or Claim to them, especially without *just Reason*, is properly *Uncharitableness*. It will hence follow, that if the Thing we are supposed to want, either has in it *no Excellency*, or to be destitute of it, is *no Reproach*; or if it be what we neither pretend to, nor belongs to our *Character*, then 'tis no Breach of Charity in any one who will not allow us to have it. Thus, since 'tis no Disparagement to a *Physician*, that he has never read the polemical Writings of the *School-men*, nor to a *Divine* that he is not vers'd in the Writings of *Galen* and *Hippocrates*; nor to one who understands many other Branches of useful Learning, but pretends not to any Skill in the *Mathematicks*, that he is not able to demonstrate one Proposition in *Euclid*, 'tis no defect of Charity to conclude so. As to *religious Matters*, there are some *Sentiments* or *Opinions* which have such *Ideas* annexed to 'em, as carry the Appearance of *Reproach*; and all groundless Insinuations that any one embraces them, are an Instance of *Uncharitableness*: But if it be *no Dishonour* either to affirm or deny a Doctrine, then *Charity* has nothing to do with a Man's Opinion about it: Or if it be reckon'd an *Honour* to affirm what generally passes for Truth, 'tis not deem'd uncharitable to conclude that he is on the reputable side of the Question; tho' perhaps he be not on the right side thereof. Therefore in *Papish Countries* 'tis not reckon'd uncharitable to conclude,

clude, that a Person believes the Doctrine of *Transubstantiation*, or other Doctrines of the *Romish Church*, how absurd soever they appear to those of the Reformed Religion; tho' twould be resented as a Crime to charge any with the Belief thereof where that prevails. And if *Arianism* were the prevailing Opinion, 'twould be reckon'd no Reproach to deny the *Divinity of our Saviour*, and therefore no Breach of Charity to charge Men with it, how detestable soever the Error be in it self. So that *Uncharitableness*, as considered under this Limitation, is a thinking, *without sufficient Evidence*, that a Man believes what it is a *Dis honour* to be thought to believe, who therefore conceals his Sentiments till a more favourable Opportunity offers.

AND as for what concerns a Man's *moral Character*, 'tis no *Uncharitableness* to think him *vile*, who makes no Pretensions to the least Degree of *Virtue* or common *Honesty*: But if Men of the *best Character* and strictest Morals, should reproach one another with those Indecencies of Expression, which one would rather have look'd for among those who bid Defiance to the more *polite Methods of Raillery*; this can hardly be excus'd from *Uncharitableness*, tho' *want of Charity* be oftentimes the grand Pretence for their taking such a Liberty.

#### §. II.

WHEN an *Accusation* is brought in against any one, 'tis either lodg'd in our own *Breast*, or discover'd to others; and if discover'd, the Person's *Design* in reporting it, and the real *Detriment* receiv'd thereby, is to be consider'd as what will render the Guilt of *Uncharitableness* much greater. The least Degree thereof is indeed a Crime, tho' no present, real, or sensible Disadvantage may accrue thereby, as it can hardly be suppos'd

pos'd to do when our Resentments are lock'd up in our own Breast; since 'tis inconsistent with that Love which is due to others: And how little Prejudice soever they may receive from it; yet, if our Passions be not under a due Government, it may lead us to further Instances of injurious Behaviour towards them. When the Mind of Man is overcharg'd with Resentment, it is not only fill'd with perpetual *Uneasiness*, and proves its own Tormenter; but 'tis hard to know where this will end, whether it may not grow up to a perfect *Enmity*, and prompt Men to attempt any thing that is injurious and unworthy, against the good Name and Welfare of him whom they hate. And was this universal, how would the Peace and Happiness of this lower World be disturb'd, and Men but one Remove from the most envious and miserable Part of the Creation!

## §. III.

WE are accountable to GOD, with respect to the *Justice of our Sentiments* concerning Men, as suppos'd to *embrace* or *deny* the greatest and most *important Articles* of the Christian Faith. 'Tis almost impossible but, so far as we know Men, we must determine something concerning them, which is either attended with *Pleasure* or *Dislike*; and this is either *Good* or *Evil*, as it is *agreeable to*, or *recedes from*, the Rules of *Justice*. Therefore 'tis not an Instance of *Uncharitableness* to think that a Person is *departed from the Faith*, no more than to say that he is *guilty* of any Action that is *scandalous* and *vile*; provided our Conclusions relating to this Matter are *strictly just*, and founded on sufficient Evidence; this is the only thing that will keep us free from the Guilt of Censoriousness or evil Surmising, in this, or any other Case, where things of a criminal Nature are conceiv'd against others in our Thoughts.



HE is therefore chargeable therewith who concludes a Person vile, lays *Crimes* or *Heresies* to his Charge which he *pretends not to prove*, and which he would never have thought of, had he not been his Enemy; this Charge is therefore founded in *Malice*, and reflects a greater Dishonour on him that first invented, and resolves, right or wrong, to maintain it, than it does on the Person accused.

THERE are also *other Charges*, founded not so much in *Malice* as *Bigotry*, which carry in them a great deal of *Uncharitableness*; as if a Person is not of that Party to which we adhere either in *civil* or *religious* Matters, then we are ready to fasten Crimes upon him which have no Foundation but in our own Imagination. This is what has divided whole Nations, embarrass'd their Affairs, and put them into the utmost Confusion; it has occasion'd *Schisms* in Churches, and Excesses of Passion and Resentment in those who are more attach'd to their peculiar Humour, or rather under the Influence of others, than inquisitive after the Reason of Things. This, next to secular Interest, has been the main Support of the *Romish Church*, the Cement that has held them together for so many Ages. They knew well enough what they did when they persuaded the People to put out their Eyes, and *believe as the Church believes*, without being obliged to render a Reason of their Faith; for if they should be too inquisitive about that Matter, 'twould be the ready way to make them cast it off; so that nothing more is required but that a Man be a Bigot to that Party. And the Consequence hereof is the same as in all other Instances of *Bigotry*, it makes Men ready, when the Word of Command is given, to censure and condemn all others, and to spend their Shot on those whose Faith they are Strangers to, which

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they may easily be suppos'd to be, since they are so to their own.

THIS has broke the Harmony of the most reformed Churches in the World; tho' alas! 'tis no new thing, since the Apostle *Paul* saw it spring up when the Church was in a better Condition than now, and reproveth their Party-zeal, which produced, as he observes in 1 Cor. iii. *Envy, Strife, and Divisions*, tho' without Reason, since *Paul, Apollos, and Cephas* were carrying on the same Design, and preaching the same Gospel, as *Ministers of CHRIST, by whom they believed*; yet each of them, it seems, had his respective Admirers, who could hardly allow common Civility to any other. I might further consider, that this has, in all Ages, made some considerable Numbers of Men give in to *new broach'd Errors*; so that there scarce ever was any *new Doctrine* advanc'd, but some have been ready to adhere to it; and then a Flame is kindled, and Reproach mutually distributed till the Peace of the Church is broken; and all this arises from Mens being first inclin'd to believe whatsoever they are taught, and then to follow the Example and Direction of their Leaders, as to Temper and Conduct, towards those who differ from them; tho' they have nothing to say in the Behalf of the Cause or Party they adhere to. This disposes them, on all occasions, to declare against those who cannot think as they do, even in the *smallest Matters of Religion*; and all this arises from a rash and precipitate Judgment of Men and Things not founded in *Justice*; for which an Account is to be given to Him who judges according to Truth.

#### §. IV.

WHERE it is morally impossible, that we can have *sufficient Evidence* to support an *Accusation*, Justice and Charity oblige us to exercise a *Suspense*  
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of Judgment, and not pretend to assert what we cannot prove. No one who is tender of his own Reputation, would in any other Instance advance an Argument which he knows he cannot maintain; for this is to trifle with Mankind, and betray the Truth: Much less ought any one who attacks the Honour or good Name of another, to load him with Charges which he can't make good, which is to *defame* and *bear false Witness* against him. This may be so commonly observ'd in Conversation, that where one thing surmis'd or reported concerning another is true in all its Circumstances, an hundred are (if not altogether false and groundless) so perverted, that 'tis difficult to depend on any thing related to the Prejudice of another, especially if he who relates it, seems to *wish* it were true, if it be not so.

WHEN this sort of Treatment extends it self to Mens *moral Character*, then they are sometimes charg'd with any thing that is *base* and *vile*, and that, on no other Ground than uncertain *Hear-say*, which seldom gives a true Report of Things, when it industriously propagates what makes to their Disadvantage. And to make a greater Improvement on this Subject, how often are the most *secret Designs* of Men pretended to be known, and even the *Sincerity* or *Hypocrisy* that is in their Hearts? Have these Men an *extraordinary discerning of Spirits*, or are they like the *Prophet*, who could tell the *King of Israel* what his Adversary the *King of Syria* spoke in his *Bed-chamber*? Or have they a greater Penetration into the Designs of Men, than they have themselves? who know nothing of the Matter, till their Thoughts are confidently told by those who pretend to this exquisite Knowledge of Things; and they wont stick to tell what Men will do *for the future* when they can't tell themselves.



As to *Mens Sentiments about important Articles of Faith*, these cannot always be known, and then we are not proper Judges concerning them, especially when for Reasons best known to themselves, they industriously conceal them, and complain of Imposition and rude Treatment, if any one desires to be inform'd about them. In this Case, to avoid *Uncharitableness*, we must not offer Violence to their Inclination, by needless Importunity to obtain that Satisfaction which is not to be allow'd; and therefore we are not to determine beyond our Evidence. How far we are bound to enquire into the Reason of Mens being thus cautious, and on the reserve, when the *Honour of God* in the World requires a *publick Profession* of their Faith, or we are more immediately concern'd to know it, I shall not enquire.

I MIGHT under this Head of *passing a Judgment on Mens Sentiments without sufficient Evidence*, take notice of the rash and inconclusive Determinations of some that profess themselves to be in the *new Scheme*, who take a Liberty to assert what I presume they cannot prove, that all the Men of Sense among the *Dissenting Ministers*, are on the *Non-subscribing Side*, and that these, for the most part, give in to *that Scheme*, tho' they want Courage to own it publickly. This is but a very indifferent *Specimen of Charity*, in those who talk so much of it; and were there Ground for this surmise, 'twould give a very melancholly View of things. But Assertions without Proof deserve no regard, neither is there Ground to suppose this meerly because they are claim'd by them; and tho' I am not authoriz'd to give the Sense of others, I might be bold to affirm, that to the best of my Observation, there are none of those who subscrib'd to the *Doctrine of the Trinity* in the Words of the *first Article of the Church of England*, &c. how small a Scantling

ling soever of *Charity* will be allow'd 'em, but would receive the latter part of the Insinuation with Indignation, since there is a vast difference between not declaring their Faith in the *Doctrine of the Trinity*, and denying it. And if it be presum'd, that a small Number of them have too favourable Thoughts of the *New Scheme*, does it follow that the greater or best part have so? These are Instances of *Injustice* to Mens Characters in asserting Things destitute of Evidence, in a Case wherein *Suspense of Judgment* is the most that should be pretended to.

## §. v.

IF a Person holds any *Doctrines contrary to the most important Articles of Faith laid down in Scripture*, the necessary Consequences of his Errors may, without Uncharitableness, be charg'd upon him, if not disown'd by him; and if *they be*, these Consequences are notwithstanding to be charg'd on those Sentiments, abstracting from their being *his*, and he is not altogether free from the Imputation of a *Crime*. Every Position, whether true or false, has its *just Consequences* deducible from it; these indeed may not be equally evident to every one, for all do not reason alike, and many can't see the Connection and Dependence of Things, which are easily apprehended by others. In this Case, 'tis unjust to say a Person holds that which he declares he does not; for if we suppose him not to prevaricate (which *Charity* obliges us to do, unless there are some Circumstances which give Ground to suspect his Integrity) we have no other way to judge of his Sentiments, but by the Discovery he makes thereof himself: But if he denies the Consequence, which ought with the greatest Reason to be deduc'd from what he asserts; while I am bound to say, that he argues injudiciously, I cannot but conclude also, that his *false Reasoning* may be deem'd

deem'd more or less culpable, as it more or less affects Religion, or detracts from the Glory of GOD. 'Tis true, a Person may infer *absurd Consequences* which argue no more than a Defect of Judgment, or a confus'd way of Thinking, as when they relate to *Doctrines of no great Moment*; but if they relate to those which be of the *greatest Importance*, 'tis no indifferent Matter how he argues about them; for even his *false Reasoning* may in some Cases be imputed to him as a *Crime*; and that either when his Premises are true, and his Conclusion destructive of Religion, or when the Premises from whence he argues are pernicious, and yet the Conclusion he infers from them contains an undoubted Truth. In the former of these Cases, suppose the *Premises true*, and the *Conclusion subversive of Religion*, this way of arguing must be charg'd on him as a *Crime*. Thus, if he asserts that GOD is *merciful*, and infers from thence, that *He is not Just*; or *Just*, and therefore concludes that *He is not Merciful*; or as *Jonah* argues, he knew that GOD was *Merciful and ready to forgive* the Sin of the *Ninevites*, therefore 'twas his wisest way to refuse to obey his Commission to preach to 'em whatever it might cost him: Or suppose a Person asserts that *CHRIST is GOD*, but yet concludes, if we may call it a Conclusion, that *He is not to be worship'd*; certainly, in such like Cases, Mens false Reasoning don't excuse them from the Charge of Guilt that attends these Consequences; this I suppose will, without Difficulty, be allow'd. But suppose his *Premises false* and pernicious, and the *Conclusion* illogically deduc'd from 'em, if I may so speak, to be true, and tending to establish Religion, yet his Reasoning may be reckon'd criminal; especially if he be capable of taking in an Argument: Thus, if a Person should assert, that the *Universe, or Frame of Nature is GOD*, and conclude



conclude from thence, that *God is Omnipresent*, or that *the divine Perfections may be comprehended*, and therefore that he is to be *lov'd and worship'd* by us; or that the *Son and Spirit* are *inferior Gods*, dependent on another divine Being, *viz. the Father*, therefore *there is but one divine Being*; or that they have *divine Perfections*, *arbitrarily communicated* to 'em, therefore *they are to be worship'd*, tho' divine Worship is an ascribing infinite Perfection to its Object: The *Conclusion* in these Instances is *true*, but not justly deduc'd from the *Premises* which are false. And is this Man to be excus'd who thus argues, because in his way of Reasoning a Truth is deduc'd? this is as tho' *Religion* should be press'd or enforc'd by a *wrong Motive*, or a false Principle laid down as the Ground of a true one. He who thus reasons can not be excus'd from a Crime, tho' what he affirms is true; for in this Case his *Ideas* of Truth are accidental, ungrounded and irrational, which therefore differ but little from Error; and therefore tho' the pernicious Consequence of an Error is not to be so reckon'd *his*, as that he must be charg'd with holding it, yet in many Cases he is far from being guiltless, so far as Religion is herein concern'd; in that he does not improve his reasoning Faculty to the best Advantage, in deducing those Consequences which he ought, that tend to advance the Name and Glory of *God*.

*Obj.* A Person can't help his own Reasoning.

ANSWER, True, and if a Person should say he can't help committing Sin, shall he for that Reason be discharg'd from the Guilt thereof? but this I need not enlarge on. See Part I.

#### §. VI.

WE are not to entertain Thoughts of Mens having departed from the Faith with any other  
Temper

Temper of Mind than what *Christianity suggests*, and that teacheth us to pity the *Person* whose *Errors* we detest, and not to express our Resentment by endeavouring his Ruin. In this Case we suppose a War is indeed commenc'd, some falling, and each side thinking it self oblig'd to contend earnestly for the *Faith*: But how is this Contention to be manag'd? not by *inventing* and *reporting* what may tend to render our Antagonist odious, nor by *receiving* any Report of that Nature with an *Air of Pleasure*, as concluding that thereby his Cause is weakened, and if he maintains it with the greatest Strength of Argument, yet all he says ought to be treated like himself with Neglect or Contempt: How mean a Way is this of engaging against the Defenders or Opposers of Truth! But alas! 'tis too common with many who have no better Arguments to produce.

If he, who is on the other side of the Question, be in a *publick Station*, and therein set for the *Defence of the Gospel*, how pleasing a thing it is among those who are Masters of this way of arguing, to have some Reproach ready at Hand to load him with! 'Tis no great Matter whether it be true or false, 'twill answer their End if it be but credited, which no doubt it will be by some, and so an end will be put to the Dispute, and he will be oblig'd to turn his Weapons in his own Defence. This is an Expedient for a weak Adversary to make good his Retreat, without acknowledging that he is no longer able to maintain his Ground; but 'tis a very dishonourable way whether it be us'd in Print or Conversation. The Press is no Stranger to this Temper: If any one dares venture to appear in publick, he must be prepared to run the Gantlope of Reproach and Censure, if he happens to embark in a Cause that meets with Opposition; let him but make one remarkable Blunder, (and he's a happy Man that don't) if one of his Arguments is weak,

and apparently inconclusive, then his whole Performance is expos'd, and as it were hiss'd out of the World; and then let him say what he will in its Defence, the Cause he pleads must fall to the Ground, *sic concluditur contra*, &c. And sometimes the Mind is possess'd with Prejudice, and the Argument must needs be unworthy of Regard, because it is managed by one who is of a *differing Party*; for it seems the whole World is divided into Parties; Thus if one pleads, with Justice and Strength of Argument, in the Behalf of *Liberty*, he can say nothing to the Purpose, unless he extends his *Ideas* to the very Borders of *Free-Thinking* and *Scepticism*, banters the Word *Orthodoxy*, and maintains, without any Exception, the Innocency of Error, and that a Man may lampoon and satyryze the *Doctrine of the blessed Trinity* with Impunity. Or if any one is branded, tho' unjustly, with the Character of an *Imposer* or a *Creed-maker*, which, as that Word has been explain'd of late, is one who pretends to tell others that they must believe as he does, it is in vain for him to attempt any thing on the Head of Charity; the Answer is ready at Hand, it may be, before they know what he has to say for it, as *Jehu* reply'd to the King of *Israel's* Messengers, *What hast thou to do with Peace?* as tho' it was impossible to enter into the State of the Question, without extending the *Idea of Charity* to whatever length they who pretend to be on the charitable Side think fit. And let a Man defend the *Doctrine of the Trinity* in any other way than what is done by those who give in to the *new Scheme*, and immediately he is a *Sabellian*, and only for a *Trinity of Names*; or if he maintains a *Trinity of Persons*, then he is a *Tritheist*. Or if a Man is but once suspected of *Arianism*, then let him use what Doxologies he will, and produce the commonly receiv'd Arguments to prove the Divi-

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nity of the *Son* and *Holy Ghost*, yet he has some secret Reserve, and is an *Arian* in his Heart; these are the various Ways in which Uncharitableness displays it self.

THE common Topicks insisted on to this purpose, are *want of Sense* or *Learning*; and therefore he is not worthy to be disputed with, or else he manages his Argument with too much *Warmth* and *Uncharitableness*; his Passion indisposes him to receive Conviction, therefore 'tis to no purpose to dispute with him, or else he is destitute of *common Morality*, and therefore not fit to be convers'd with. Thus some Men are dispos'd to condemn their Adversary when they cannot answer his Arguments, and plentifully to deal forth Slander, being ready to receive any Report, how groundless soever it be, which may furnish him with Matter for that Purpose.

THIS Temper is the Reverse of what is a part of that Description of *Charity* given by the great Apostle, 1 Cor. xiii. 6. *It rejoiceth not in Iniquity, but rejoiceth in the Truth* \*. q. d. If he happen to hear

\* I am sensible that many suppose the Apostle, by *Truth*, intends no more than *common Justice* between Man and Man; yet since in the *New Testament* this Word is often taken for the Gospel, as 3 *Epist. John* ver. 3, 4. and 2 *Theff.* ii. 10. 2 *Tim.* ii. 18. and c. iii. 7. and in divers other Places; therefore I see no Reason to conclude that it shou'd not be so taken in this Place. If therefore *Truth* is taken for the great important Doctrines of the Gospel, in the Success and Spread whereof *Charity rejoiceth*, then when on the other Hand 'tis said *not to rejoice in Iniquity*, *adversus* is put

for that which is contrary to it, viz. a doing Injustice to the Name of God, a having unworthy Thoughts of his Perfections as display'd in the Gospel: This is sometimes called in Scripture a *Lye*, and that particularly as oppos'd to *Gospel Truth*: Thus the Apostle, in *Eph.* iv. 15. exhorts Persons to *speake the Truth*; this Truth is that which they have been taught by him, and as it is in *Jesus*, ver. 21. This they are again exhorted to *speake*, or declare, and accordingly to *put away lying*, ver. 25. that is, to assert nothing that is contrary thereunto. See also 1 *John* ii. 22. *Who is a Liar, but he that denieth*

hear that any of his Friends are departed from the Faith which they once embrac'd, or if it should be insinuated that the greatest part of those who stand upon advanced Ground are departed from it, he is far from being pleas'd with the Report; if ill-grounded, he detests it as the vilest Reproach; or if there be too much Reason for this Insinuation, his Soul is griev'd to think that Christ's Interest should be deserted, and the Hands of those that stand up for it weakened.

AND on the other Hand, with what Delight does he behold Truth defended at the Expence of all that is dear to them who are truly valiant for it! This endears them to him the more, and as unwilling that they should suffer alone, and think themselves deserted when they are reckoned Fools, or what is worse, for CHRIST's sake he readily hazards his own Reputation, and is content to fall with them: This is a difficult, but a truly noble Instance of Charity, as rejoicing in oppressed Truth.

BUT its Way is sometimes more easy and grateful when it rejoiceth in the Triumphs and Success of Truth, when its Enemies are silenc'd, if not convinc'd by the Brightness of its Evidence, its Defenders encourag'd, and the Infection of pernicious Errors abated. This is the Concern of *Charity*, with respect to *Truth*; and the Reverse hereof is highly criminal, and very contrary to a Christian Temper.

*denieth that Jesus is the Christ.* So 2 *Theff.* ii. 10, 11. They who receive not the Love of the Truth, i. e. the Gospel with Love are given up to believe a Lie that is left to the Error of their own Minds, and so they apostatize from the Truth; 'tis this that Charity takes no Delight to think of, and so rejoiceth not in Iniquity.

## §. VII.

CHARITY is not to be extended to, or withheld from Persons at Pleasure, as tho' it were a precarious Virtue, or to be dispens'd in a way of *Stipulation*, upon the Performance of certain Conditions which the Person that exercises it thinks fit to acquiesce in: This would suppose it not to be founded in *Justice*, but in our *arbitrary Will*, and not to be reckoned as a Debt due to Mankind, which we are unjust and guilty in the Sight of God if we withhold; but as an Act of common Favour, to be extended to whom and in what way we ourselves judge convenient.

THEY who are Witnesses to those Parts of Conversation which are much disrelish'd by Men of Temper and Justice, will often hear Men, whose Talent lies that way, charging one another with Crimes they never thought of before: But a Desire of making Reprisals renders the Invention fruitful and flowing; so that if one produces, out of his Store of Scandal, some ill-natur'd Compliment, the other will immediately return it upon him, otherwise he is outdone, baffled, and put to Silence, which he resolves not to be: This is to act like him whom *Solomon* describes as casting *Fire-brands, Arrows, and Death, and saith, Am I not in Sport?* and this he does not because the Person deserves it, but because he provokes to it, which is as much as to say, if you have a bad Opinion of me, I am resolv'd to have the same of you, whether you deserve it or no: But if his Behaviour is kind and obliging, then he shall have the like Treatment, and be entitled to that Charity which he purchases to himself thereby.

WE need not go far for Instances of this Nature, 'tis too well known that some Men have entertain'd a Quarrel with each other on the Foot of *declaring*, or *refusing* to declare their Faith in  
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the *Doctrine of the blessed Trinity*, and Reproaches have been distributed on each Side; *Arianism* on the one Hand, and *Imposition, Persecution, and denying the Sufficiency of Scripture*, in determining important Articles of Faith on the other, have been, and are still reciprocally charg'd. By some the Charge is founded on the *Conduct* of each Side, but others assign no other Reason but what is very weak, *viz.* your Side have fastned an unjust Charge on us, therefore they must not take it amiss if we make Reprisals of that Nature upon you: What is this but to resolve to be *uncharitable*, that is, unjust to the Characters of Men, if they are so to us.

BUT if we suppose *on the other Hand*, that Persons grow weary of this Temper, and what may not Time produce, or rather the good Hand of that Providence which restrains those Remainders of Wrath which he does not design to over-rule to his own Glory? We will therefore suppose Men resolv'd to enter into *pacifick Measures*; and, if so, these must be such as the Nature of the things in Debate require, consisting principally in a Demand of *moral Evidence* that the Charges are unjust on either Side; and in order thereunto, 'tis preposterous to assert that there ought to be a *Stipulation* or *Agreement* to this Purpose; that one declare that he will not lay any thing to the Charge of the other, provided he may have the same Treatment from him: This indeed might without any Difficulty be comply'd with, were there not other Circumstances attending the Charge on each Side, which render it necessary that the Justice thereof be consider'd, since the Honour of GOD, and Satisfaction of the World is concern'd therein. And besides, this renders that *conditional* which is an *absolute Duty*, for I am bound, *so far as in me lies, to live peaceably with all Men*, whether they will or no.

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IF therefore some kind Friend would propose an Expedient for Peace, 'tis not enough for him to advise one Side to allow their offended Brethren to be no *Arians*, MERELY for not declaring their Faith in the *Doctrine of the blessed Trinity* in those Words which they thought well chosen, for that will give Occasion to some uncharitable Standers-by to think them so for some other latent Reason, which the Word MERELY is so far from guarding against, that it may be understood to contain an Insinuation of that Nature; therefore this Expedient, as I humbly conceive, with Submission to better Judgments, would do more hurt than good. And on the other Hand, to acquit Persons from the Charge of *denying the Sufficiency of Scripture to determine Articles of Faith*, MERELY for *subscribing to the Doctrine of the Trinity* in other than Scripture Words, may give Occasion to some to think that they deny its Sufficiency for other Reasons; especially since 'tis generally allow'd by 'em that Articles of Faith may be determin'd by *just Scripture Consequences*. From hence it may be concluded, that to refuse to give in to such a Proposal ought not to be deem'd on either Side an Instance of *Uncharitableness*.

BUT if it were propos'd that both Sides should communicate their Sentiments in a private and friendly Conversation, (which I hope is not oppos'd by their Arguments who so strenuously dispute against declaring their Faith in any other than Scripture Words) if to confer together about the *Doctrine of the Trinity* is not by them reckon'd an Offence, or to propose it as the Subject of Conversation an *Imposition*, and if Persons will let one another know their Sentiments plainly, which is no greater Hardship to one Side than the other, and 'tis no more than what most Persons would do, if some other *Articles of Faith*, which few or none deny

ny were made the Subject of Conversation; I say, if this were done, and 'twas happily found that each of them agree in those things in which they were thought to do before the Quarrel began, or if the Difference appears to be only about some *Modes of Explication*, which have no Tendency to overthrow the *Substance of the Doctrine*, then let him have the Brand of *Uncharitableness* put upon him who is not heartily willing to lay aside all former Prejudices, and pursue those Methods which make for Peace, and the rolling away the common Reproach, and let him be reckon'd criminal who so much as neglects to give a Check to the least Insinuation against another, as tho' he was departed from the Faith, when he is sufficiently furnish'd to confute it from what he knows to the contrary. Without this, all that any one can reply to such a Charge can be no other than this, I hope you are mistaken, or I shou'd be very glad, were I able, to tell you I am sure you are so.

DID I thus know a Man to be free from the least Suspicion of having departed from the Faith, I ought to be reckon'd *uncharitable* if I did not put a Stop, as far as it lies in my Power, to any Accusation of that Nature against him, tho' I had Reason to conclude that the Person whom I plead for, through his Mistake of me, rather than his having ground for it, were mine Enemy; for I am oblig'd by the Laws of Christianity to do justice to those that espouse the Cause of Truth, not because they are *my Friends*, nor as expecting that they shou'd do the same by me, but because the *Honour of God* and Religion is concern'd herein, which ought to give Laws to my Conduct in this Matter.

#### §. VIII.

CHARITY is not inconsistent with *Zeal for Truth*, tho' often reckon'd so by those who are uneasy at the Defence thereof, or any Opposition  
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made, how just soever it may be, to the contrary Errors. I don't intend, by *Zeal*, those furious Excesses of Passion which disturb the Mind, enflame the Spirits, and degenerate into *Hatred and Fury*; which Temper is indeed included in the general *Idea* of the Word, but it don't comprise the whole Nature thereof, for it is sometimes oppos'd to *Luke-warmness* and *Indifferency*, which the *sacred Writings* every where condemn; and under this Notion we consider it, and in particular as having *Truth* for its Object, and suppose it to be kept within its *due Bounds*: This is certainly consistent with *Love* and *Meekness*; for our Saviour did not transgress the Bounds of *Charity* when the *Zeal of his House* transported him in an uncommon *Degree*; neither could the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* discover the least Exorbitancy of Passion in him, when he so often call'd them *Hypocrites*, and reprov'd them with a Warmth which the Nature of the thing requir'd. Nor was the Apostle *Paul* to blame when he addresses himself to *Elymas* in such Expressions as these, *Acts* xiii. 10. *O full of all Subtilty and all Mischief, thou Child of the Devil, thou Enemy of all Righteousness*, when milder Terms would not have reach'd his Case. But as for us, we know so little of Men, that to be too free in giving such Characters might be unwarrantable; notwithstanding there is a *Zeal* which may be expressed, while we are sparing in our Reflections on Men whom we have to do with: This is what I call *Zeal for Truth*, abstracting from the *Persons* who have departed from it; and it consists in an argumentative Way of defending it, or exposing the Absurdities of the contrary Errors. This, no doubt, might be done, if there were not a Man upon Earth who espoused 'em; and this does not necessarily infer a Design to expose particular Persons, what Constructions soever ill-natur'd Censure may put upon

it: Or if my Arguments are more directly levell'd at particular Persons, yet while I oppose 'em only as imbibing those Errors, and am willing to grant 'em whatever is praise-worthy in their Character, I am far from having any Hatred redounding to them whom I oppose; or if I expose the Consequence of their Sentiments, I cannot be reasonably suppos'd from hence to desire, that whatsoever Evil they contain may fall upon them. Thus I may assert an Argument to be *pernicious* in its Consequences, and yet attempt and hope for the Conviction and Salvation of him that maintains it; or that a Doctrine leads to *Licentiousness*, and would have that Effect on some others if holding it, and yet at the same time conclude that many, who see not that Consequence attending it, and whose Conversation evinces the same, are far from deserving the Character of licentious or profligate Persons, especially if the Consequence be not necessary, self-evident, and plainly subversive of all Morality.

THIS I the rather take Notice of, because Men are not inclin'd, as they ought, to do one another Justice in what relates to *Zeal*, since many think that 'tis almost impossible for any one to oppose an Error, but he must reflect upon some who are known to maintain it, which is immediately censur'd as a kind of Rudeness, not to let People alone who desire to be undisturb'd. And if some Errors are distinguish'd from others, as being of a very dangerous Nature, such as are inconsistent with *true Religion* under the Direction of *divine Revelation*, or having such an Influence as renders *our Faith*, in its various Branches, *vain and fruitless*, as the Apostle *Paul* says concerning the *denying the Resurrection of the dead* in general, and that of *CHRIST* in particular; or if we consider them as being of such a Nature that they *reflect on*, and tend to defame the Name and Glory of *the great*

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GOD our Saviour; which is infinitely preferable to all created Glory, and take the Crown from his Head, and argue Him not fit to govern the World who is its rightful King; this is suppos'd by some to be intolerably warm, and little less than to revile Persons whose Notions and Temper are better than our own. And if we lament the unhappy Spread of *Arianism* in a Quarter where 'twas least expected, and with it the Growth of *Deism*; then we afflict our selves with needless Fears and Jealousies, and at the same time endeavour to make others uneasy as well as our selves.

IF Ministers bring this Matter into the Pulpit, their *Zeal*, how well qualified soever it be, is reproach'd as inconsistent with *Charity*, and their Warmth prejudicial to the Church's Peace; which wou'd be easie enough, were it not for the Disturbance it receives from such a Method of preaching; and if the Word *Heresy* is but once nam'd, much more if we speak of Men's *bringing in damnable Heresies* in the Apostle *Peter's* Words, consisting in *denying the Lord that bought 'em*: This tries their Temper, and puts 'em into a Rage, because we have no more *Charity*; and if, in the same Apostle's Words, we call the Propagators of these Heresies *false Prophets*, and *false Teachers*, and happen not to subjoin some note of Exception, then we must needs mean some of our Brethren who differ from us in Matters of Conduct. Or if we say, according to the Apostle *Paul's* Prediction, that *some have departed from the Faith, giving heed to seducing Spirits, and Doctrines of Devils*, then we mark out particular Persons, and give 'em hard Names; these are the Constructions which are often made of the most warrantable Zeal for Truth. That there may be just Reason to blame the imprudent, intemperate, and groundless Zeal of some, I will not deny: But certainly it is very possible for Men



to express their Zeal, on this Occasion, without giving just Reason for Disgust. Why may not this be allow'd? since *true Zeal* is acknowledg'd by all to be very consistent with *Charity* or Love to Mankind, when any one bears a Testimony against Vice; which we may do, with the greatest Warmth, and at the same time not be suspected of being guilty of the Breach of *Charity*, or the least Degree of Malice against those whom we think it our Duty to reprove.

## §. IX.

LUKEWARMNESS, or *want of Zeal for the great Doctrines of the Gospel*, is no necessary Ingredient in *true Charity*. Here we might take Occasion to consider the Behaviour of some, whose natural Temper inclines them to nothing but *Peace, Love, and Unity*, among Men of *all Denominations*; this is their constant Theme, and it seems to be the greatest part of their Religion; so that they are not much concern'd, tho' *Truth* in its most important Articles be in the utmost Danger, or suffer Shipwrack, if this remains safe and entire. These are Men who cannot breath in any other but a calm and temperate Air; their Passions are not often ruffled, nor their Peace disturb'd by religious Jarrs and Contentions, than which there is nothing they fly from with greater Abhorrence. Happy Temper indeed! and much to be desired, were it not, at the same time, *unjust to Truth*, and did it not make Infringements on that Zeal and Concern which every one ought to have for it: But this is certainly a great Abatement of its Excellency; and, as so qualified, we can call it no other than *Lukewarmness*, as to that which has an higher Title to our Esteem, since *divine Truth* is a Beam of His Glory who is the highest Object of our Love. Were these Men call'd in as *Mediators* to reconcile the various contending Parties, their Advice would be to lay aside  
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all Disputes, without the least Regard had to the Importance of the things in Debate; all are good Men in their Opinion, therefore what if there be some little Mistakes in some Men's Sentiments about *the Divinity of our Saviour and the Holy Ghost*; or if some say that they have the same divine Nature with *the Father*, and others think that they are a little *inferior to Him*, or that they deriv'd their Being and Perfections from him, what doth all this avail, since all acknowledge that *they are God*, and that the *Son* must be worshipped? that is, we must acknowledge his Kindness, in what he did and suffer'd for us, and the Spirit may be worshipped, tho' there be no Example or Command for it in Scripture, if so be we ascribe to him the Honour that is his due for the kind Offices he performs to the Church. And suppose you don't know one another's Meaning of those Scriptures, which ascribe Divinity to these *three Persons*, it is enough if you do but agree *in Words*, and it is beyond Dispute, that both Sides are willing to give their Assent to those Scriptures, in which this Doctrine is contain'd, as infallibly true. Thus we may suppose these Men giving Advices for Peace, and as a farther Motive to it, they will tell us that *Errors in Judgment*, whatever they be, excepting such as deny the Being of a *God*, are not of so bad a Tendency as *want of Love* to one another; therefore we must contend at no rate, tho' many think there is the greatest Reason for it. Were any *Texts* of Scripture to be given up as spurious, and such as they could readily part with, they should be, in their Opinion, those that advise to *contend earnestly for the Faith once deliver'd to the Saints*, or to *strive together for the Faith of the Gospel*, &c. and they are apt to call *Zeal*, whatever be the Occasion of it, and tho' mixed with *Love* and *Compassion* to Mens Persons, an *angry Temper*, which  
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we are, by all means, to lay aside. This is like the Advice of some good humour'd Men, in Matters of common Right and Justice, who without considering the Merits of the Cause, would have no Man ever go to Law with another, whatever he may suffer by it: But were the Cause their own, they would hardly lose an Estate, which they have an apparent Title to, for want of passing through those usual Methods by which it might be tried and determined. This Advice hath its Weight only in trifling Matters, which no wise Man would be at the Trouble to contest; or if Respect was only had to the Temper with which things ought to be contested, every one must allow that whatever the Cause be, whether in *religious* or *civil Matters*, it ought to be managed with a due Temper of Mind, discharged from that Malice and Rancour which the corrupt Nature of Man sometimes prompts him to, as being impatient of Contradiction.

As for the *Doctrines* that we are to contend for, which, using the Apostle's Words, we may call *the present Truth*, they are far from being mere *Trifles*, such as may be received or rejected, and our State as Christians not affected thereby; but, as has been before considered, they are such as support the whole Fabrick of Religion; and to be only a *Sceptick* in them, is to lay the Foundation of perpetual Uneasiness, and to be at a Loss as to what deserves the Name of Religion. Can we therefore express a greater Instance of our *Love to others* than to attempt their *Conviction*? If denying those *Doctrines*; or *Establishment*, if embracing them, especially when there is the least Danger of their being turn'd aside from them; (in which Case it is hard that any one should be charg'd with Unkindness who warns them of it) he is therefore no Friend to Mankind who thinks it needless, and advises Men not to be at the Trouble, to *search after Truth*,



*Truth*, or who entertains hard Thoughts of any who endeavour to *enforce it* by the justest Methods of arguing. To call this a *delighting in War* and Contention, and to exclaim as much against it as one would do against those Excesses of Passion and Prejudice which affect Men's Persons, as though these two could never be separated, is to persuade Men to put out their Eyes while the Enemy is upon them, or to lay aside their Weapons in a Time of War. What may Posterity expect from this? our Charity to them will not be much seen while we are indifferent as to those Truths which they may, by our Example, be tempted not only to disregard, but also to deny and wholly to reject. The Conclusion therefore that may be drawn from hence, is evident, *viz.* that *Truth* and *Love* should not be separated; so that we are not to be indifferent as to the one, while we are zealous for the other. I might shew that there is a great Difference between *unwarrantable Zeal* for Truth, which is for the most part attended with *Hatred to Men's Persons*; and a *stupid Indolence* and *Lukewarmness* in the Cause thereof, joined with a specious Pretence of our loving all Men: The *Medium* between them consists in our doing what in us lies, as hereunto moved by the Law of Love, to preserve those, who are in Danger of turning aside from the Faith, from this Apostasy, and the sad Consequences thereof. It is *Love* that is the Motive inducing us hereunto, and that should express it self with Tenderness and Compassion towards them who are led aside; since it is not their *Persons* but their *Sentiments* that we militate against, which we are oblig'd to do to prevent the spreading thereof; and thereby, as much as in us lies, to guard against the Inconveniencies which others may sustain thereby: By this means we express a due *Regard to Truth*,  
and

and a *Love* to those who are, or may be, inclined to *depart from it*, at the same time.

§. X.

THERE may be *Uncharitableness* not only in their Temper who make it their Business to recommend *universal Charity*; but this is often discernable in the Manner of their pleading for it. That they, who would have us conclude that in *religious Matters* they are entirely Masters of their Passions, are not always calm and undisturb'd when treating of 'em, is too obvious to require Proof: And tho' it be no delightful Thing to expose human Frailty in those Instances in which all are liable to it, yet *Quis tulerit Graccos*, &c. We need look no farther to furnish us with Matter under this Head than some *late Pamphlets*, in many of which the Authors conceal their Names, probably because they can't conceal their Temper; and one wou'd be tempted to conclude that their Style is a Satyr on their Argument, which so often recommends and urges that which they themselves at the same time express so little of.

BUT, not to insist any farther on this Head, let us enquire what they mean by *universal Charity*; is it only this, that we are to perform those Offices of Kindness which we owe to one another as Men, desiring for them the best of Blessings, and doing what is in our Power that they may attain them? In this all *are* or *ought* to be agreed, in as much as it is, without doubt, a *moral Duty*; but that which they seem to contend for, under this glorious Character, is, that we should think alike of all Men, tho' one embraces what one calls an important Truth, and another denies it as an Error; and that we should do this more especially with respect to what concerns their *Right to eternal Life*, or at least to the peculiar *Privileges which the Church* enjoys

joys as a Pledge thereof; or more particularly that we should think an *Arian* who sincerely enquires after Truth is in as fair a Way for eternal Life as he who hath what we call the justest Notions of it; and that therefore we must, if we would be duly charitable, conclude that he who calls the *Doctrine of the Trinity* an unreasonable Doctrine, a Fiction of Mens Invention, and therefore he cannot worship these *three divine Persons* as we do, by giving them equal Honour, yet we must suppose that he has as good a Right to the Privileges of a Worshipper as any other: This *Idea* of Charity we must be excus'd from entertaining, and at the same time hope notwithstanding that we are not defective as to what may truly be call'd so; for it is a Charity for Mens *Persons*, rather than their *Notions*, that the Gospel obliges us to: And as our Love to Men takes its Motive from what is most excellent or amiable in them, they have certainly the greatest Right to it who *walk in the Truth, as it is in Jesus*.

IF the *Example* of those whom we contend with about this Matter may be of any Significancy, or any Regard is to be had to an *Argumentum ad hominem*, we may, by comparing *their Charity* with *ours*, easily see who has most Reason to bring in the Charge of *Uncharitableness*. Nothing is more common with them than to declare, and their Practice visibly corresponds to it, that they have Charity for all, but those who have *no Charity*; that is, for all but those who oppose their own *Scheme of Doctrine*; or if they mean by it that they hope all may be saved in *any Religion*, this is to extend their Charity too far in one Respect; while, by excluding those from it who abhor and condemn their Notions, they contract it too much in the other: But if they intend hereby that they are ready to express their Love in

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the trueſt Inſtances thereof to the *Persons* of all Men, but ſuch whom they brand with the Character of *Uncharitableneſs*, then we may boaſt that our Charity far exceeds theirs, for in this Reſpect it does or ought to extend it ſelf to all, without Exception, even to thoſe who have none for us, tho' we are not allow'd to have the leaſt Degree thereof.

AND this may lead us to enquire whether, when they condemn the *Uncharitableneſs* of others, they don't herein convict themſelves: Are we warm in our Temper to a Fault? ſo are they; otherwiſe, what means their charging our Faith as being unreaſonable, when we adore, and think with Humility and Reverence on what we cannot comprehend. If their CHARITY ſo far exceeds ours, what means that inſulting Sneer which is ſometimes obſerved when the *Doctrine of the Trinity*, or any other Doctrine wherein we differ, is publickly aſſerted and attempted to be prov'd, as tho' the Muſcles of the Face could ſupply the Defects of the Brain, which is a new Method of answering Arguments? Or what that ſarcaſtical Banter on the Word *Orthodoxy*, as tho' there was nothing certain in *revealed Religion*? or if it be *our Orthodoxy* which they intend to expoſe thereby, as ſuppoſing that we have no more Right to that Word than we have to *Charity*, all that I ſhall ſay to that is, *let not him that girdeth on his Harneſs boaſt as he that putteth it off.*

BUT paſſing this by, as what muſt be expected and ſubmitted to from thoſe who have no other *Conditions of Peace* to offer, but our *denying the Faith* which we profeſs, or ceaſing to *maintain it*, I cannot conclude this *Eſſay* without reflecting, with ſome Concern, on our unhappy Circumſtances, as having not yet found out the *way of Peace* with our *Brethren*, who profeſs themſelves to be  
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with us in the *Doctrine of the ever blessed Trinity*; and many of them, I presume, have a just Regard to it as a *Doctrine of Importance*; there is still a mutual Charge of *Uncharitableness* advanced, and a Reservedness of Temper agreeing thereunto. Whether this proceeds from a remaining Dislike of *former Conduct* in what relates to those things that first occasioned the Division, or *something new* has offer'd, I pretend not to determine; every one is Judge of the Matter of his own Resentment, and it may be, one sees those Occasions for Estrangement that another knows nothing of, for the Quarrel is now lodg'd in private Hands, and ceases to be the Act of any *Body of Ministers*, yet 'tis perpetuated in such a way that some speak on this Subject as tho' they were the Representatives of the rest. And upon the whole, we have but a very melancholly Scene of Affairs, especially when things proceed so far that *common Civilities* are almost laid aside, and Party-Zeal, like a Torrent, carries down all before it. This indeed is no new thing, for we find that the same Temper was complain'd of in *Cyprian's Time*, in Words too well adapted, as it happens to *ours*, tho' upon a very differing and less momentous Occasion\*.

If I am ask'd what Occasion there is for our present Contentions, it might be easily answered that there can be no just Reason for them, so far as they are managed with *censorious Insinuations*, destitute of that Proof which one would expect, nor for shunning all friendly Conversation, or being forc'd to be upon the Guard therein, as tho'

\* Vident [*scil Angeli*] *diver-* *divisis ab invicem nec confabu-*  
*fas quorundam mentes, & scissas* *latio jam possit esse, aut sermo*  
*voluntates, quasi non tantum communis. Firmil. Cypriano in*  
*unum, & eundem Dominum Epist. 75.*  
*simul invocent, & separatis &*

Pag. 75. Lin. 17. for *him*, read *them*.

we look'd for nothing else but that it should be perverted to our Disadvantage; that part of the Controversy which discovers it self in *Passion* and *Prejudice* can never be vindicated: But if the Question be still urged upon us by those who desire to be satisfied what it is that we really contend about, whether it be mere Trifles and groundless Reports which we will not be at the Trouble either to confute or receive Satisfaction whether they are true or false, but chuse to believe them true, rather than demand a Proof that they are so: If this be the Ground of all; then that Wisdom and Justice, by which our Temper shou'd be govern'd, will be very much call'd in Question: But many, rather than think that there is any Defect in this Respect, will be apt to conclude that there is something of greater Importance that lies at the Bottom which we are not willing to own: And for their Satisfaction, 'tis pity the thing were not truly stated in Conversation, that neither Side may be reckoned to be what their Soul abhors. There is an easy Way to prevent the bad Influence of *false Reports*, without calling a *Synod* to censure those to whom they owe their Original, since these, with Men of Temper and Justice, appear and die at the same time. If therefore our Contentions proceed from this Spring, one would think 'twere not difficult to compromise them: And if so small a Matter as Mens knowing one another, and distinguishing between what is merely *surmised*, and what is *true*, would heal the Wound, there is no one but owes so much to the Cause of Peace, as that he should readily contribute his part to it. If the Servants of that angry Courtier mentioned in *Scripture* cou'd give an happy Turn to his Rage by telling him, that *if the Prophet had bid him do some great thing* to obtain what he came to him for, *he would have done it*, why may not this small

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Condescension be us'd to obtain so valuable an End as what we desire, and allay the Heats that are among us. But if Providence has not at present a Design to grant us this Favour, let the Blame lie at his Door who refuses it, and the whole Body, some few excepted, be guiltless.

I might insist on a far more weighty Argument to induce us hereunto, than what is taken from the securing the Reputation of particular Persons, who apprehend themselves injuriously accused and reproached, since it would tend to the Satisfaction of Multitudes who wish well to the Interest of Religion in general, and may probably be further establish'd in the Truth hereby. Some are ready to think that whatever Complaints might have been made at first of *Imposition* and *Persecution*, tho' I am persuaded nothing less was design'd, yet, if instead of putting the worst Construction on the most innocent Actions, both Sides had joined together against the *common Opposers of the Faith* we profess, as it would not have tended so much to their Dishonour as to be dis-united in a time of common Danger, so it might have been well accepted by Him, whose *divine Glory* is called in Question; and they who have such low Thoughts of Him, would have less Reason to boast of the vast Additions made to their Party, which 'tis to be hop'd notwithstanding are not so great as they imagine who are so sanguine upon the Matter: And if the *Moderation* of one Side had not so much declined the *Zeal* of the other, the common Interest of Religion would have been more promoted.

BUT is there no Hope that 'twill be otherwise? Shall Contentions have no End? Will Men bite and devour one another till they are consumed one of another? Shall not *Truth* and *Peace* have a fresh Lustre put upon them, and prevail in our Day:  
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This is only known to Him who *stills the raging of the Sea*, and *commands a Calm*. But we may conclude that things will have a better Aspect when Men are brought to a better Temper; when groundless Surmises are not entertain'd to any one's Disadvantage; when Accusations are not depended on as true, without the least Attempt to prove them so; and when, in particular, to *lament the Defection of many from the Faith*, and warn People of the Danger of Apostacy, without the least Shadow of Reflection on those who suppose themselves aggriev'd thereby, is not call'd a *Fasting for Strife*, or with a Design to keep up the Difference. When Persons no longer bring *Charges* of this Nature, without pretending to make them good; or when the Imprudence of single Persons in Conversation shall not be imputed to the whole Body, or unwary Expressions or Actions done with no ill Design shall be no longer misrepresented, so as to be made to signify more than what was ever intended by them. In fine, when Persons can see a Necessity of coming into some Measures to prevent the *Growth of Error* among those who are first inclined to conclude that there is not so great Weight in those Truths which we contend for, and then are led to deny 'em, and afterwards discover such a Warmth of Temper as not to be easy, or upon good Terms with those by whom they are defended: And when the common Interest of Religion has the highest Place in our Affections, and bears down all Resentments of personal Injuries, look'd upon thro' a Magnifying-Glass, and aggravated to such a Degree as tho' 'twere hard to invent a Punishment equal to the Crime; or to asperse and give an unjust Representation of our Sentiments, which indeed is vile, and not in the least to be vindicated, deserv'd an Exclusion from that Charity and Degree of Friendship which they  
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are admitted to who *blaspheme that worthy Name by which we are called*; and when Abatements are made for human Frailty in others, which sometimes we cannot but confess we stand in need of our selves; when this Temper prevails among us, we may hope to see the Revival of that Interest which is infinitely preferable to all that Honour and Esteem which, by false Suggestions, we are capable of being robb'd and plunder'd of.

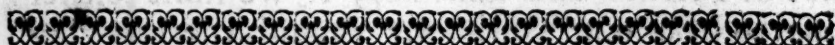
BUT if this is too great a Blessing to be expected, if we must yet dwell in the Flames, and struggle with unsurmountable Difficulties, and have things laid to our Charge which we know nothing of; if we must stand alone, and bear the Shot of Friends and Enemies; if we must either cease to bear our Testimony against the growing Error of the Day, or else be reckoned *uncharitable*, and charg'd with reviling those whose Sentiments we are Strangers to, and therefore can't reasonably be suppos'd to intend: If we must be mark'd out as exercising intemperate Zeal, beyond all Bounds of Reason and Charity, we can only commit our Cause to Him *whose Judgment is according to Truth*; he knows whether any of us deserve that Censure, or whether we have not too much Reason to blame our selves for want of Zeal, considering the Occasion there is for it, and the Glory of *that Cause* which we are called to maintain, whilst many of us can say we *know nothing by our selves*, with respect to want of *true Charity* to the *Persons* of all Men: And whatever hard Thoughts any may entertain of our Temper and Conduct, I am perswaded that every one who wishes well to the Interest of CHRIST will rejoice, when it farther appears, as it does now in many Instances, that a censorious World is as much mistaken in their Sentiments of *our Brethren*, when it charges them with having departed from the

*common*



*common Faith*, as they who are thus charged are mistaken in us when they think we are Enemies to Peace; which I hope we are desirous to cultivate and maintain upon the *justest Grounds*, and by our *Love* to them *in the Truth*, to approve our selves *His Disciples*, who is the *wonderful Counsellor*, the *mighty God*, the *everlasting Father*, the *Prince of Peace*.

F I N I S.



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